UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

THE COURTSHIP CRISIS

Traditional Middle Eastern Courtship, Marriage and Sexual Knowledge Transmission in a North American Context With Implications for Education

by

Jendju Collins

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate studies and research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education.

IN

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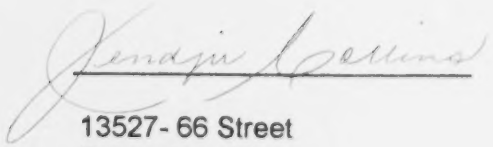

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the faculty of Graduate Studies and research for acceptance, a thesis entitled *The Courtship Crisis Traditional Middle Eastern Courtship, Marriage and Sexual Knowledge Transmission in a North American Context With Implications for Education* submitted by Jendju Collins in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education in International/Intercultural Education.

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ABSTRACT

Immigrant communities, particularly small ones, often face pressures to adjust their behavioral archetypes to a new context. This study examines this issue within the Christian Arab Canadian community in Edmonton. In order to conform to contemporary peers, teenagers and young adults find themselves rebelling against parental authority. They also find themselves forced to reject one of their own culture's traditional core aspects - the female ideal or archetype. Conflict arises between parents and children over dating and marriage. This propels the family into a crisis situation: the "Courtship Crisis".

This study also examined formal and informal knowledge transmission concerning courtship, marriage and sexual behavior both within the Middle Eastern and Canadian context. Findings of this study have implications for the field of anthropology and educators who are working with populations which experience these kinds of socio-cultural conflicts.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am deeply indebted to the members of the Christian Arab Canadian community who opened their homes to me and were generous and patient in helping me with my inquiries. Without these people, many of whom I now consider my friends, I would never have been able to understand the complexities of Middle Eastern courtship, marriage and cultural transmission.

Secondly, I would like to thank my advisor, Dr. Assheton-Smith, for her work and patience as my superviser; Dr. S. Abu-Laban for her extensive commentary, useful suggestions and emotional support; and Dr. Forth for his insightful questions and perspectives regarding the symbolic aspects of a number of different areas within this thesis. I would especially like to thank Dr. Vierich for her unfailing support and encouragement.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my daughter, Chelsea, for whom this thesis is an offering of part of her heritage. I hope she will learn from this, as I have learned, that in spite of all the restrictions which Arab women have experienced throughout history, their internal strength, extraordinary humor and survival skills have always triumphed.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Focus of the Study

This thesis is concerned with institutions of courtship, marriage and sexual knowledge transmission in the Christian Arab Canadian immigrant community in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. This study came about as a result of long term interest in traditional Middle Eastern and African sexual customs and ideologies, and research in related areas, such as, 'female genital deconstruction', 'coming of age' rites, and associated codes of behavior. The focus of this study is on ways cultural and societal institutions operate by examining formal and informal knowledge transmission and change of courtship, marital, and sexual codes of behavior. The primary impact of this transmission and change is the family; the educational aspects interwoven in this process are directly addressed in the final chapter.

Urban anthropological research and analysis was conducted in a contemporary setting in which the area of inquiry is a special case study in the process of social change. Demographically small immigrant communities in North America tend to face pressures to become inter-married with surrounding populations. This entails a shift to 'exogamy' in marriage practices, or to state it another way a breakdown of endogamy. Most ethnic and religious cultural communities practice some degree of endogamy, thus controlling their own dissolution in the larger whole. In some immigrant communities the numbers may become too small to maintain customary marriage systems, and it is an obvious assumption that this might be the case with the Christian Arab Canadian community.

The theoretical framework for approaching these issues has been *adaptation*; the underlying assumption that communities will adapt to new situations, such as contact with other cultures. The specific area of adaptation examined (ideological conflicts and the resolution of conflicts this entailed) was integration in the larger community as a facet of immigrant experience, and within that process of adaptation conflicts concerning the nature of the female sexual role and related behavior codes.

Purpose for the Study and Research Question

A Pilot study was undertaken in the Christian Arab Canadian community in Edmonton, from September 1993 to December 1993. This study indicated that there were many aspects of courtship, marriage and sexual knowledge transmission occurring which were not previously mentioned in the literature. The main fieldwork period which followed, from January 1994 to January 1995, focused on a detailed understanding of this situation. A descriptive model has been developed and will be presented, of a conflict arising between parents and their children over a disparity of ideologies, perspectives and standards of behavior regarding courtship; marriage; the nature of female sexuality; the patriarchal authoritarian system; and the traditional Middle Eastern concepts of honor and shame. This conflict first arises during adolescent years, may continue into adult years -- and can carry through until either the child is given or takes a position of autonomy in decision-making and behavior, or is married. It persists until it mushrooms into what is herein called the "Courtship Crisis". The 'Courtship Crisis' represents a critical point reached during family conflict. It involves two main antagonists: father and daughter, although the roles of mother and son each bear upon the crisis. The purpose of this study is to contribute to the literature, as well as inform the further development of educational programs and media which may ameliorate negative consequences of the crisis.

The overall research question addressed in this study is how is the content of expected codes of behavior, beliefs and values with regard to courtship, marriage and sexuality being transmitted and changed in Christian Arab Canadian families in Edmonton? The specific questions are:

1. what are the underlying causes of the courtship crisis and its resolution

2. by who and how is "courtship" related content being transmitted; and by what methods is content transmission facilitated?

LITERATURE REVIEW: THE ARAB IMMIGRANT EXPERIENCE AND COURTSHIP

A number of studies of the Arab immigrant experience in North America have been identified, including Abu Laban, S. 1989; Arur, N. 1969; Ba-Yunus, I. 1991; Bisharat, M. 1975; Cainkar, L. 1987; 1988; 1991; 1994; Eckholy, A. 1966;

1969; Hagopian, E. 1969; Waugh, E., Abu Laban, S. and Qureshi, R. (eds.) 1991. There were few studies which focused as the community of this study, on Christian Arab immigrants (Kayal, P. 1974 and 1983; Sengstock, M. 1974). Specifically addressing the Arab Canadian immigrant experience were 13 studies: Abu Laban, B. 1969; 1980; Abu Laban, S. 1979; Barclay, H. 1976; Hogben, M. 1991; Jabbra, N. 1983; 1984; Jabbra, N. and Jabbra, J. 1984; 1987; Keck, L. 1989; Khattab, A. 1969; Razual, H. 1978; Wassef, N. 1978.

Of the above, only Abu Laban (1979), Cainkar and Haddad concentrate on Arab women; while five studies discussed the North American Arab immigrants experience of courtship and marriage: Abu Laban (1979), Barclay, Cainkar, Henderson, and Wassef. Although Hogben and Ba-Yunis centered on mate selection, their community focus was Muslims in general - thus not necessarily Arabs. In all studies, excluding Cainkar, women's experiences and voices were rarely reported, and only two studies included Christian Arab Canadians (Abu Laban 1980; Jabbra 1983).

Following is a descriptive account of the few who did discuss or focus on any aspect of courtship and marriage among Arab Canadian or Arab American women immigrants. Most studies, including those samplings which contained some Christian Arab immigrant women, focused on the Muslim Arab female experience or Muslim courtship experience in general. Excluded is Barclay's 1976 study which reported to some extent on courtship, marriage and the family among Arab Canadians, but concentrated on the experiences of 20 Muslim men. Included is a descriptive account of two relevant studies: Danziger's (1976) study of Italian immigrant girls in Canada and Kocturk's (1992) study of Muslim Turkish immigrants in Sweden.

Jabbra (1983) conducted an ethnographic study of the Lebanese immigrant community in Nova Scotia. She examined "three representative extended family case studies" for assimilation and acculturation. Among other aspects, she looked at friendship, marriage, family and sex roles. She describes a typical immigrant marriage pattern in which young men return to the old country for a bride (59). Jabbra reports that Lebanese Canadians stereotyped Canadians as "sexually immoral, prone to drink, irresponsibility, and desertion". Moreover, they tend to remember the one failed case of intermarriage, forgetting the many others which are as happy as non-intermarried couples (60). Jabbra concluded in her study that after the 3rd or 4th generation and a few inter-marriages, not much will remain except a "dim nostalgia for Lebanon" (71) and any of the other home countries Arab immigrants are from.

Cainkar's (1988) dissertation was an exploratory study focused in Chicago between 1982-1986 on both immigrant and American-born-and-raised Muslim Palestinian American women. She sought to ascertain the "central features and values of these women's lives" (243). Gender was found to be a

critical but not uniform variable in combination with social class in determining the "importance of maintaining traditional gender roles, and how to respond to host culture differences" (15). Immigrant Palestinian women in the United States as a community in exile, perceive a political necessity to continue maintaining traditional cultural beliefs and patterns as a form of social resistance.

Cainkar (1994) discusses Palestinian American immigrants that were either well adapted to American culture and/or had changed little since leaving their homeland. At the core of both groups, is an "anti-assimilation burden", particularly on the women, to maintain their traditional cultural beliefs and patterns. This burden exists because of a sense of alienation felt by immigrant Palestinians due to their Palestinian identity (86).

Wassef (1978) conducted a study of Egyptian immigrants in Montreal and reports they were not integrated in terms of social relationships. Among Egyptian men in Montreal two groups emerged, each displaying their own behaviors and views regarding marriage. Among the first group were those who desired a Canadian wife, stating she would best suit the society in which they were now living. The second group were more traditional, stating a preference for an Egyptian wife – specifically one from Egypt, to assure she had not been influenced by Western ideas. As a consequence, both tended to disregard the Egyptian Canadian woman as a prospective wife. Wassef further discusses a broad range of aspects with regard to the Egyptian female community in the new environment.

Wassef discovered evidence of large scale intermarriage occurring in Montreal. She reports one Arab Canadian Montreal priest indicated that during the period from 1960 to 1970, approximately 1200 marriages involving Egyptians occurred within his church; of these, 57% were marriages with Canadians – the majority being French Canadians – and only 8% were with English Canadians (218).

Interestingly, 55.5% of her total sample were families with teenagers. Only one fourth of these would admit to, and discuss with the researcher, problems concerning their teenagers (218). Problems began occurring when sons began "to stay out late, expressed a desire to leave the family, or threatened to discontinue their higher education" (218-219). For daughters, staying out late at night or having a boyfriend were activities not even considered within these families, whereas it was acceptable for sons to date and bring girlfriends into the family home. Family restrictions, based on parental ideals, created barriers between the daughters and Canadian society (219).

Abu Laban (1979), reporting on the Arab Canadian family in the Toronto-Montreal Sample Survey, states that there is a parental concern regarding "personal conduct of females" (168), especially with regard to "female sexual

expression" (170). She concludes that "first and second generation Arab-Canadian families in particular, are likely to remain on the conservative side of the tolerance continuum when it comes to female sexual expression and definitions of decorum and propriety with regard to female behavior" (170).

Danziger (1976) who conducted a study on the acculturation of Italian immigrant girls in Canada, reports the Italian community tends to "let the males bear the brunt of the acculturation process" whereas measures are taken to shield females from this process so they may "become guardians" of traditional core values (201). In addition, he reports that conflict exists in the family with respect to "acceptance of parental norms" verses individual autonomy for unmarried female family members (205). Danziger's premise is that an examination of the resistance which a cultural group has to certain aspects of acculturation provides "valuable hints on the crucial dimensions of cultural difference - the points on which the culture is not yet prepared to yield" (200).

Kocturk, (1992) conducted a study which examined the social-cultural impact of western industrial society on Muslim Turkish immigrants in Sweden. Two themes emerged in the area of gender relations: "protection of family unity and sexual honour"(104); the latter was found to be a similar and significant concern in this thesis. Koctruk reports that some brothers stated they would "kill" their unmarried sister(s) if they discovered she was having a sexual experience, as the "act would bring dishonour to the family" (109). Discussion was brief and few examples of the nature of the conflict between parent and child are described, however, the courtship conflict was not the focus of this study.

Thus, previous scholars (Abu Laban 1979; Cainkar 1987; Danziger 1976; Kocturk 1992;) *have* reported a parent-child conflict occurring among immigrant families with regard to the parent's traditional expectations verses contemporary desires and behavior on the part of the child(ren), in particular daughters. However, these studies were not focused specifically on the actual dynamics of these conflicts. The researcher was intrigued by this relatively unexplored aspect of the immigrant experience, and made it the focus of the study reported here. It was found that this conflict actually builds into an intense family crisis: the "Courtship Crisis".

METHODOLOGY

This thesis is a qualitative ethnographic study. Ethnographic research aims to acquire an "insider's view" of the natives' cultural world. Two features are central for obtaining this perspective:

> Because it is unknown, or is treated as such by the ethnographer, it must be learned. And because it is a framework, a schemata, it is best modeled by a pattern that is gradually discovered and then interrelated with other patterns. (Agar 1980:195)

Ethnographic methodology was chosen for this research project to provide the researcher an opportunity to associate with respondents over an extensive period of time, in a variety of contexts for two important reasons. First, to develop a trusting and comfortable relationship between researcher and respondents – considered mandatory as a basis from which to question and discuss intimate aspects of this research study. Secondly, to acquire in-depth knowledge and understanding, as opposed to a more superficial comprehension, of the dynamics involved in the context of courtship, marriage and sexual knowledge transmission.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

The following is a clarification of terms used throughout this thesis:

Inter-religious marriage:

Marriage between two people who hold different religious beliefs, usually implying Muslim and Christian in this thesis, is referred to as an inter-religious marriage. For example, cases in which one spouse is Christian Arab Canadian and the other spouse is Muslim Arab Canadian.

Inter-ethnic marriage:

Marriage of a couple in which each spouse has a different ethnic background are referred to as an inter-ethnic marriage. For example, where one spouse in a marriage is Arab Canadian and the other is Ukrainian Canadian. Cases where both religious and ethnic backgrounds differ between spouses, are referred to as inter-religious, inter-ethnic marriages. For example, when one spouse in a marriage is Muslim Arab Canadian and the other spouse is Christian German Canadian.

Intermarriage:

Intermarriage is a gloss term referring either to inter-ethnic or inter-religious marriages. Marriages between Arabs who speak different dialects, or who are from different nations, for example Lebanese Arab Canadian or Moroccan Arab Canadian are not considered intermarriages.

"Traditional" verses "Modern" Families

One of the findings of this research was used as a post hoc stratification method. This finding was that the nature of the family's behavior and ideology reflects whether or not a courtship crisis has occurred and the father has already undergone an ideological shift because of this courtship crisis. In other words, there were no first generation immigrant families in which behavior could be described as *'modern'* except those in which an ideology-shifting courtship crisis has occurred. To some extent this is because fathers - in part because of their traditional role of an authority figure within the family - determine the tone, whether it be *'traditional'* or *'modern'* of the family as a whole. Therefore for purposes of discussion in this thesis, families in which the father has not modified his traditional ideology after experiencing a courtship crisis within the family, are referred to as *traditional* families. Where the father's ideology has been modified their households are referred to as *'modern'*. Therefore *'modern'* refers to a family where the father responded to the 'courtship crisis' with eventual acceptance that open dating was not inconsistent with family honor.

The mother does sometimes play a role in colluding with the children to 'get around' her husband, but since the interest here was in trying to find a clear basis on which to compare families, i.e., a typological or stratification device, it seemed simplest and most in keeping with the emic[1] qualities to divide the sample into these two main categories on this basis.

***"Traditional"* verses "Modern" Individuals**

Where the views of particular individual's are discussed, further subdivisions have been made in post stratifying the sample. For instance the reader will find that girls whose responses to their 'courtship crisis' is to be docile are referred to as *traditional*; girls who rebel are referred to as *modern*.[2]

---

[1] Emic means the internal subjective categories of the informants themselves. The emic terms of *'traditional'* and *'modern'* were used by respondents to refer to one another.

[2] See chapter three, section: 'The Feminine Split'.

"Female"

Due to the specific ideological cultural categorization of "girl" and "women" in Arab tradition, the word female is used in order to convey a wider age group within this gender, than is typically associated with the terms girl and woman in Canadian English usage. In Arab usage a woman is a female who is married or has sexual experience (which ever comes first). Under certain circumstances, a 12 year old female may represent a woman; conversely, a 27 year old female may represent a girl. The term female is deliberately used in this thesis to avoid confusion resulting from the specific cultural meanings inherent in the terms girl and woman.

"Extended" Family

The usage of the term 'extended family' here refers to a group of people related through blood whose relations tend to centre upon a senior household headed by a patriarch, an older male figure, who is the eldest of a group of brothers and sisters and who has a certain degree of authority within his own and his younger siblings families. Extended family here is not a lineage, but rather a kindred, because it includes relatives from both sides of the family.

SAMPLING: Description of Participants

Fieldwork[3] was conducted with a non-random sample of a total of 39 Christian Arab Canadians in Edmonton. Both participant observation and unstructured interviews, including life histories, were conducted among informants, both male and female, from nine extended families over a period of 16 months. In focusing on the extended family, the lead of Jabbra (1983) was followed, who found the extended family to be the most useful unit of analysis in the Arab community (58).

Through fieldwork, this researcher established a range of between 10-130 individuals within these nine extended families. The average size of these extended families is estimated to be about forty individuals. These estimates are based on actual numbers given to the researcher by respondents in the sample. There was an average number of seven households, or co-residential units within each extended family. The average nuclear family size was six individuals. Based on discussion with the respondents the estimated total number of Christian Arab Canadians in Edmonton is about four thousand people. This

[3] Fieldwork conducted, including the pilot study, was undertaken for a period of 16 months: from September 1993 - January 1995.

research then sampled about 10% of the estimated 90-100 extended families in the Christian Arab community in Edmonton.

There were 17 first generation respondents and 17 second generation respondents. There were 21 female respondents and 18 male respondents in the sample. Included in the sample were five non-Arab Canadian respondents, two males, three females, each married to a Christian Arab Canadian spouse.

There were twelve married couples, five were inter-ethnic (Arab Canadian and non-Arab Canadian) marriages, of which one was divorced. There were no inter-religious marriages[4] in the sample, i.e., Muslim and Christian. There were fifteen unmarried, and no widowed, respondents. There were three second generation respondents which were from bi-cultural families.

The range of ages among both first and second generation males and females was between 18 and 56 years. There were 11 respondents between the ages of 18-25; 10 respondents between the ages of 26-34; 7 respondents between the ages of 35-46; and 11 respondents between the ages of 45-56. Educational levels represented were from elementary to post-secondary schooling. There were 12 respondents who had elementary and/or junior-high school education; 11 respondents had secondary education, of these only four completed grade 12; 16 respondents had or were obtaining post-secondary education. Economic status[5] levels ranged from lower-socio economic to higher socio-economic.

First generation Arab immigrants came from Israel[6] (eight), Lebanon (six), Egypt (two), and Syria (one). Among second generation respondents there were 12 Palestinian Canadians, 4 Lebanese Canadians, one Egyptian Canadian and no Syrian Canadians. The majority of respondents were from a Palestinian heritage. In addition to the diversity of home land origins, first generation respondents did not all originate from a fixed time of entry into Canada. Rather, they represent a continuing influx over the last 32 years (1962-1994). The sample therefore contains an "immigrant cohort" as defined by Abu Laban (1989) who suggests utilizing this concept as an "temporal yardstick for reassessing group strengths and vulnerbilities" and to gain deeper insight and understanding into the nuances both "between and within the subdivision of an

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[4] One co-residential unit interviewed however, included several brothers and a cousin of a sister's nuclear family in which the parents of the brothers and sister, were in an inter-religious marriage (Muslim and Christian).

[5] Economic status was assessed informally. Income levels were not asked, but purchasing power, type of housing, vehicles, etc., occupation, ownership's of business, jobs held, and other economic indicators were noted. Education levels were formally assessed.

[6] None of these people in the sample population could be classified as Palestinian refugees.

ethnic group" (46). All extended families were from rural backgrounds, except one who emigrated from an urban sector of a Middle Eastern country (Cairo).

Out of a total of 39 respondents, 23[7] had taken trips to the 'old country' for various reasons; six respondents had made trips during this fieldwork, of those, one returned to the 'old country' permanently. The sample is modest, but seems fairly typical of major patterns occurring in a cross-section of the Christian Arab Canadian community, not only in Edmonton, but across North America.

VALIDITY

Foremost in the researcher's mind throughout fieldwork and analysis was to maintain a standard of trustworthiness of data. In order to do so the following four procedures (triangulation of data collection and sources; face validity; catalytic validity; and systemized reflexivity) suggested by Lather (1986), were incorporated into the research project. Methods utilized in analyzing the data collected are discussed under data analysis in chapter three.

Triangulation of data collection was achieved through the combination of interviews and participant observation. Extensive unstructured interviews conducted over an extended period of time provided the opportunity to acquire in-depth knowledge and understanding: 'an insider's view'. Obtaining life histories was utilized as a second form of interviewing and data collecting. Participant observation enabled the researcher to "engage in activities appropriate to the situation" and "to observe the activities, people and physical aspects of the situation" (Spradley 1980:54). This combination afforded the researcher opportunity to establish close relationships with respondents, enabling awareness and understanding of more subtle meanings and nuances operating in the community.

Interviews were conducted using Spradley's (1979) ethnographic methodology and included three main types of ethnographic questions: 1) descriptive, 2) structural and 3) contrast.

> 1. Descriptive questions enabled the researcher to accumulate a growing sample of the respondent's language and cultural speech patterns in both Arabic and English. For example, could you describe the

[7] There were eleven first generation, ten second generation and two non-Arab Canadian spouses which made trips (in some cases, several) to the 'old country'.

party/wedding you attended?; or could you describe what a typical day consists of for you?

2. Structural questions enabled the researcher to discover information about "domains, the basic units in an informant's cultural knowledge" (Spradley 1979:60). For example, "what are the different kinds of shame?".

3. Contrast questions enabled the researcher to determine "what the informant means by various terms in their language." (Spradley 1979:60) For example, "what is the difference between *'eyb*, *khuzy* (or *khajal*) and *'aar*?"

*In addition, "reciprocity...*a mutual negotiation of meaning and power...between researcher and researched" (Lather 1991) was also used as a data collecting technique (57). Here the "researcher moves from the status of stranger to friend and thus is able to gather personal knowledge from subjects more easily" (Lather 1991:57).

Fieldnotes: Three separate detailed records were kept:

1) Unstructured interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Observations during interviews were recorded. Notes and observations were recorded during non-tape-recorded interviews, or immediately thereafter. Interviews were conducted in English.

2) Perceptions, interpretations, questions and intuitions arising during fieldwork were recorded.

3) Researcher's experiences, including responses, mistakes, and suspicions were recorded.

All recorded sources were cross-checked to investigate any discrepancies, counter-patterns and convergences.

Triangulation of data sources was achieved through:

1) literature research of anthropological, sociological and historical sources was conducted for two purposes:

a) to provide a historically-based portrait of the courtship and marriage institutions, behavioral codes and ideology which first generation respondents were born and raised into.

b) for comparative purposes with the personal historical data collected during fieldwork

2) Data was collected over a period of 16 months (including the pilot study and fieldwork), and included a *wide array* of participants from nine extended families. A breakdown is as follows:

a) both male and female respondents participated in the study.

b) respondents were both first and second generation.

c) amount of time respondents have resided in Canada varied.

d) first generation respondents had emigrated from a diversity of Middle Eastern countries.

e) a wide range of ages were selected to gain a broad range of perspectives from different age-level experience.

f) a wide range of educational background was represented.

g) a wide range of socio-economic standing was represented

Face Validity

Face validity, member checks, established by recycling emerging categories, analysis and conclusions through a subsample of respondents (Lather 1986:76) providing them with the opportunity to respond, was undertaken. A continuous feedback system was employed and tentative results were refined in light of the respondents' reactions. Both member checks and "sequential interviews conducted in an interactive, dialogic manner that entails self-disclosure on the part of the researcher foster(ed)[8] a sense of collaboration... as opposed to a negotiated validation of the descriptive level"

[8] Parenthesis are researcher's.

(Lather 1991:77). On more than one occasion respondents stated "I never thought about it that way before but you are right".

Catalytic Validity

Lather (1986), states catalytic validity is "some documentation that the research process has led to insight and, ideally, activism on the part of respondents" (78). Through a demystification of traditional ideologies and attitudes, and beliefs surrounding an individual's position in relation to these, many respondents were empowered to take responsibility for improving their own situations. New ways of perceiving, thinking and acting resulted. For some *traditional* women (including those married) participating in the research process motivated them to take small steps in new directions to obtain freedoms and self expressions previously perceived as prohibited. A typical statement heard from these women was:

> Before there was always depression and muddle. It helped me think clearer. I've actually started to change since the interviews. Its made me look at my husband in a different view. He's not the centre of my world anymore and he knows it now. My kids are my most centre of my life now and me. It helped me put my life and all the little things into perspective so now I'm more clear thinking. I go out by myself now. It's not for long, maybe only a half an hour at a time to begin with, to the neighbor's for coffee or to the mall, but it's by myself and I leave him with the kids.

Some of these *traditional* second generation males, still apprehensive about approaching their fathers, are instead approaching their mothers as mediators with regard to the underlying issues of courtship. Avenues of action previously perceived to be closed were now viewed as open, if only to discussion.

Among some *traditional* unmarried first generation males, categories of certain women and of female behavior that were previously considered unacceptable, negative and/or shameful, are now viewed as somewhat more acceptable. For example, one first generation man initially held the perspective that any married woman[9] who went to a bar (or any place which serves alcohol) unaccompanied by her husband is perceived as having only sexually promiscuous intentions. Such behavior was perceived and labeled as shameful. "what she is trying to achieve in a bar? Explain it to me. To socialize?"

[9] Unmarried females who went to bars or places which served alcohol were also viewed from this perspective.

Interestingly however, upon being presented with a number of perspectives from which this behavior may be viewed, such as a professional woman having drinks after work with some collegues, this man adopted a more permissive perspective. He then stated, "I never thought about that before you brought it up and I agree with you. I never thought about what you told me before".

In general, respondents began to examine their own thinking, adopted new perspectives of viewing their situation and ideologies, then made the choice to act in areas previously considered barred to them. The research process provided an opportunity for respondents to grow through deliberative examination of their experiences.

Systematized Reflexivity

Reflexive validity provides some documentation of how the researcher's assumptions have been affected by the logic of the data. Previous literature reviews and personal experiences in African and Arab communities led to the expectation of finding some manifestations of traditional Middle Eastern ideology and traditional codes of behavior specifically regarding females, courtship, marriage and sexuality. The aim of the present study was to 'determine to what degree this was operating in a Canadian context and to what degree change is occurring'. The research found that these ideologies were maintained in the first generation (and among *traditional* second generation) respondents but in a large majority of cases, ideological change occurred due to a family crisis centering around courtship and female sexuality. The prevalence and intensity of crisis was an unexpected finding. The researcher discovered conflictual events more extreme than she was led to expect from the literature. Notwithstanding, this confirms how important these ideals of female sexuality are in traditional Arab culture since they are only able to be altered as the result of a very intense family conflict.

Influences on the Study

Although the project focused on the Christian Arab Canadian community in Edmonton, the researcher had access to, and communicated with, many Muslim and Druze Arab Canadians in Alberta regarding the same issues. In addition, ongoing communication with some Arabs currently living in the Middle East occurred throughout this project and still continues to occur regarding the context of courtship, marriage and sexual knowledge transmission.

The female researcher made appropriate dress and behavioral changes when interacting with respondents. There was more conservative dress and behavior when interacting with *traditional* first and second generation

respondents; and when interacting with *modern* first and second generation respondents the researcher adopted more comparable dress and behavior. The role which this researcher was given by respondents in the study, was that of "friend of the family" and "confidante".

There were a number of factors which contributed to this researcher's ease of interaction and rapport with respondents in the Christian Arab Canadian community, especially with regard to the sensitive nature of topics involved.

1) Being female, the researcher was granted easy access to both genders. A male researcher would not have been granted this, especially considering the sensitive nature of the topics under study. For example, being female allowed the researcher to spend a considerable amount of time with married females, both first and *traditional* second generation, which simply would not have been possible for a male researcher - not even had ongoing contact been attempted through telephone. It would have been considered socially unacceptable by both the Christian Arab Canadian community, and the husband; the latter would have questioned this behavior and simply not tolerated it.

2) Being married, and a mother, created a shared-base of experience with other married persons and mothers in the sample. Also this combination, married and mother, increases female status in the community.

3) Being a student created a shared basis of experience with respondents who are students.

4) The researcher's ability to speak, read and write Arabic (although far from fluent!) contributed to increased understanding, especially during data analysis.

5) The researcher had lived in Kenya, in a multi-cultural context, and experienced first hand some of the "courtship" traditions within a culture where marriage was arranged even over the objections of the girl. This was found to represent a kind of shared experience of feminine powerlessness and male control which struck a chord with many of the researcher's informants. "Secret" dating was another aspect of this shared experience. Therefore the researcher was able to understand and empathize with many of the respondents in the present study.

6) The researcher's daughter, part Arab, is around the same age as many second generation participants, and was introduced to many respondents. This connection between respondents and Arab identity contributed to rapport between researcher and respondents.

The above combination of qualities, skills and experiences the researcher brought to the Christian Arab Canadian community, contributed to easy rapport between researcher and respondents, especially in view of the sensitive nature of the topics discussed.

Limitation of the Study

Research participants include only Christian Arab Canadians. Information obtained from Muslim Arab Canadians was excluded, therefore the results discussed may not apply to them. However in instances where it is believed results may be generalizable, the term "Christian" has been bracketed - (Christian) Arab Canadian.

Because the focus of this study is limited to the crisis situation related to courtship and marriage, and the transmission of sex knowledge, the information presented here concerns only data gathered which is relevant to these topics.

One of observations of this study was a trend towards second generation marriages being bi-cultural (not Arab-Arab); yet very few of these marriage types are represented in the current study (five inter-ethnic = ten respondents). This has implications for future studies of second generation Arab Canadians in that the comparability to earlier studies of first generation marriages may be limited.

ETHICS

This researcher's primary responsibility was to the participants in the study. Protecting their interests, anonymity and confidentiality were foremost. Names have been deleted from transcripts and a code number assigned in their place and any identifying information was concealed in the 'write-up' of this study. This code indicates gender and immigrant generation, for instance M1G1 = male number one, first immigrant generation, and F6G2 = female number six, second immigrant generation. Informed consent, which included the purpose of this research project and the 'right to withdraw', was explained to and obtained

from, participants. Key informants have read and acknowledged the validity of the findings, and a concluding account will be made available to those involved.

OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

Following is a brief format of subsequent chapters:

Chapter two is divided into two sections. The first section describes a historical context of Middle Eastern institutions of courtship, marriage and behavioral practices and a discussion of related ideology which bear upon these institutions. The second section describes the historical transmission of sexual knowledge. This is followed by a discussion of a 'transitional period' in which there were significant changes in courtship and marriage customs and ideologies.

Chapter three begins with a discussion of data analysis. This is followed by a portrayal of Christian Arab Canadian family life for females in a contemporary Canadian context. Then the basic model of the 'Courtship Crisis' is presented through the voices of respondents, followed by a discussion of the cultural context of the courtship crisis occurring among the (Christian) Arab Canadian community.

Chapter four examines the sources of conflict at the core of the courtship crisis, and concludes with a discussion of the way these issues are resolved.

Chapter five concerns formal and informal transmission of sex knowledge in the school and non-school based environments, and presents the conclusions drawn from the research.

CHAPTER TWO

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

TRADITIONAL MIDDLE EASTERN INSTITUTIONS, BEHAVIORAL PRACTICES, AND IDEOLOGY OF COURTSHIP, MARRIAGE AND SEXUAL KNOWLEDGE TRANSMISSION

This chapter focuses on courtship and marital practices, beliefs and institutions, and the transmission of sexual knowledge in a historical Middle Eastern context. Much of this Middle Eastern experience has been retained and is occurring in a Canadian context. It was the awareness that a core of traditional behaviors and ideologies still existed which prompted the researcher's curiousity with regard to its current day manifestation among Arabs who had immigrated to Canada, which was a motivating force behind this research project.

In this thesis there are two sources of historical data: first, previous anthropological and historical literature on the subject in Middle Eastern communities; second, interviews with informants who conveyed personal experiences and perspectives on village life with family and community - specifically with regard to courtship, marriage and transmission of sexual knowledge. These sources of information did not always corroborate each other. Women's voices were rarely found in the literature. Sexual knowledge and its transmission was either mentioned in passing or not addressed. Interviews were much more detailed on specific aspects of courtship, marriage, sexual knowledge and its transmission.

Rural Israel will be the base point of reference for the representation of the traditional beliefs, practices and ideology, as the majority of respondents emigrated from rural villages in Israel. There were informants from urban centers of the Middle East, but their numbers were few, and their responses corresponded to the larger population of the sample.

IDEOLOGY

There are a number of pertinent ideological constructs interwoven through time that have a bearing upon the Middle Eastern institutions of courtship, marriage and sex knowledge transmission. However, for the purposes of this thesis, only two constructs are discussed: Middle Eastern ideal of *female sexuality*; and the ideological construct of *shame* and its relationship to one aspect of honor, *'ird*. These were central reference points around which everything revolved for respondents in the study.

Middle Eastern Ideal Of Female Sexuality

Middle Eastern ideology of the female comprises a myriad of beliefs regarding many aspects of the feminine. A prevalent belief throughout the Middle East and some parts of Africa is that females have uncontrollable sexual drive. This is linked to a "voracious appetite" for promiscuity (Lightfoot-Klein 1989:39). The underlying assumption that women are not in control of their passions justifies social imposition of draconian controls.

Traditionally, one form of social control[1] imposed on females was known as the 'modesty code'. The modesty code consisted of and demanded an adherence to: a modest dress code; a clearly defined and restricted behavioral code; circumscribed parameters on both mobility and restrictive access to others, for example, contact with unrelated males was not allowed; little or no independent decision-making and action. Institutions such as segregation, seclusion, veiling and - in some places - 'female genital deconstruction', further reinforced these codes. Antoun (1968) working in a Jordanian Muslim village, provides a description of the modesty code as follows:

> "Modesty" in its present context has terms of coverage for various parts of the body; more broadly to various character traits - bashfulness, humility, diffidence, and shyness; and most widely to institutions often associated with the above - the customs and beliefs relating to chastity, fidelity, purity, seclusion, adultery, animality, and inferiority of women, to the superiority of men, to the legitimacy of children, and to the honor of the group. (672)

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[1] Sanctions (punishment of misbehavior) are another aspect of these social controls. See footnote 8 on page 23. Researcher's insertions are indicated by parenthesis.

One reason for imposing restrictive structures, like the modesty code - a symbolic structure - on females was to contend with the aspect of nymphomania inherent in Middle Eastern (and some African) conceptions of female sexuality. These codes defined parameters of 'the world of the female', specifying what aspects of life she could or could not experience.

The positive cultural ideal of the female was the product of these restrictions: the innocent virgin who becomes the incorruptable mother 'the Madonna'. This ideal is the logical counterpart to the 'whore'. In fact, the polarization of the two (Whore verses Madonna) links sexual knowledge to sexual desire to sexual behavior. To know is to want is to act. So the ideal female was kept ignorant (knowledge of biological 'facts of life' was withheld from her), she was kept away from temptation (her contacts with non-kinsmen highly restricted and chaperoned), and she was taught that any manifest sexual behavior on her part was not only ruinous to herself but to her whole family.

The female ideology to which young girls growing up in this kind of culture aspired, was to be a virgin physically until the wedding night;[2] psychologically, unceasingly pure in her thoughts and feelings;[3] and symbolically exemplified in (or through) her behavior. As a result, there has been no room for socially acceptable females in the Middle East to express their sexuality - even within the institution of marriage, although it was not always this way.[4]

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[2] Typically, a white cloth stained with the virginal blood from the wedding night was presented as a public declaration to the Arab community, or at least to the groom's family (which in turn reached the ears of the Arab community) providing evidential proof the bride was indeed still a virgin. Public opinion carries great weight within the Arab community. Therefore, presenting this evidential proof was important for the girl's future, as typically, the only respectable roles open for females were wife and mother. A failed 'wedding night test' could end the girl's chances of ever experiencing these roles in her life. Thus, many women took preparatory measures to ensure the required 'virginal bleeding on the wedding night' occurred.

[3] Al-Khayyat (1990) who conducted research with Iraqi women states, "The ideal married woman is a mother, but one who is virginal in mind and feelings" (26).

[4] In pre-Islamic Middle East there was greater allowance for a female's sexual expression. Women had higher status, marital choice of their husband, and greater freedom to express their sexuality - without affinity to shame (Robertson Smith 1903:81; Jones and Bevan 1941:6-7; Memissi 1975:37). *Mut'a* marriage (etymologically, *mut'a* means "enjoyment or pleasure" Haeri 1994:105), is a temporary alliance which provided a customary framework for the above mentioned freedoms for women (Robertson Smith 1903:83; Jones and Bevan 1941:9). *Mut'a* marriage does not involve the kin of either person, arrangements were made solely between the couple - and although they could extend their period of time together, should they so desire, they were at least required to remain with one another for the initial agreed upon time period, whether that be one hour or 99 years; and any children resulting from the marriage belonged to the woman (Roberston Smith 1903: 81-86; Jones and Bevan 1941:9-12). *Mut'a* marriages "covered all relations between a man and woman in her own home which did not involve loss of character, or prevent the woman's tribe from recognizing the children" (Robertson Smith 1903:88). *Beena* marriages, in which a matrilocal post marital residency custom was practiced, and *mut'a* marriages, were categorized under the term of *sadiqa* marriage, *sadiqa* meaning female friend.

On the other side of the gender coin, the ideal[5] male in a Middle Eastern context is one who is responsible for providing for the family in all economic aspects. In a parallel premise, he was the only one expected to be sexually knowledgeable and assertive. This complemented his economic function and provided him with an integrated ideological system.

Honor And Shame

As a system of values, ideas, and behavioral codes, honor and shame can be found in many societies. In the Middle East and circum-Mediterranean region the *'honor and shame complexes'* have a long history. *Honor and shame constructs* transcend geographical, political, religious and cultural boundaries in the Middle East. Despite a wide variation in terms, meanings, practices, and degree of influence, a thematic ideological core has persisted along with behavioral codes, et cetera, through time. This core relates mainly to female sexuality. Delaney, in Gilmore's volume of essays (1987) draws an analogy from botany, placing female sexuality and procreation at the core of the complex:

Sadiqa marriage represents marriages involving no subjugation (Robertson Smith 1903: 94-96; Jones and Bevan 1941:9). *Sadiqa* marriage was "vastly more common [in Pre-Islamic times] than it was at the time of Mohammed" (Robertson Smith 1903:125). An ideology existing during these times supports these marital practices: "an old Arab sentiment, and not a Muslim one, that the women of the group are its most sacred trust, that an insult to them is the most unpardonable of insults" (Roberston Smith 1903:125). Hence, females did not lose any honour for participating in these alliances (Robertson Smith 1903; Jones and Bevan 1941:11). These marriages are contrasted with *ba'al* marriages, "marriages of dominion" whereby "the wife is the *be'ulah* or subject wife" (Robertson Smith 1903:87). One misconception with regard to temporary marriage is the belief that these unions only occurred between lower socio-economic women and higher socio-economic men. This was not the case in Pre-Islamic times. Roberston Smith (1903) provides an example of a noble woman and other women who conducted *mut'a* marriage (85-86). Two reasons for *mut'a* marriage, generally overlooked, are that one or both parties of the temporary alliance may be already married (Robertson Smith 1903:87); or, for a couple who are in love with each other yet could not be together because their marriage was opposed by family members, (typically because they were from enemy tribes), it provided a way to be together (87). Hence in some regards it is similar to secret dating today. Moreover Robertson Smith reports that "*Mot'a* marriage, in short, is simply the last remains of that type of marriage which corresponds to a law of mother-kinship, and Islam condemns it and makes it 'the sister of harlotry' because it does not give the husband a legitimate offspring, i.e., an offspring that is reckoned to his own tribe and has rights of inheritance within it (85). For a discussion of 'temporary marriage' in its present day form as practiced in Iran see Haeri 1994; as practiced in Saudi Arabia, see Brooks 1994.

[5] This ideal of the male being responsible for economic security of his wife and children was stated specifically by respondents. In fact this was so strong that some men stated they felt economically responsible for their former wives. This was seen as the only honorable behavior and a man's duty.

> In the way that genetically similar seeds are sown in different soils produce phenotypically varied fruits, so do I believe that encoded in the honor and shame complex is a specific theory of sexuality and procreation that produces slightly different permutations in practice depending upon the environment in which it takes root. The key to unlocking the code lies, I suggest, in an examination of sexuality and procreation. (35-36)

Some scholars have sought its origins in economic and historical contexts:

> Given the conditions of economic and institutional poverty, the honor and shame system originated in the Mediterranean area when female chastity became viewed as a "valuable component of each family's patrimony, and hence, a means of acquiring useful affines in the struggle for survival". (Schneider cited in Gilmore 1987: 7; see also Davis, 1977:77)

The classical model for honor and shame as stated by Pitt-Rivers (1966), and Peristiany (1966), viewed the Mediterranean culture cognate as a prevailing and unchanging value system based on complementary codes of honor and shame. Patai (1983) views honor and shame as two halves of an ideological construct, having two levels of expression: internal (conscience) and external (judgment by the Arab community). Patai (1983) cites Nordenstam as stating honor, is a "system of virtues" among Arabs, having an "other-determined, outward-oriented character" (101). In other words, "motives, intentions, feelings, attitudes...are of no importance as long as one's outward behavior conforms to expectations" (Patai 1983:101). This other-determined, outward-oriented value-system was found to be a characteristic among Christian Arab Canadians; deriving its source of energy from fear of *fadiha*, scandal, in reference to the 'shame construct'.

Many researchers have focused on honor as a central point of reference. Campbell (1964) based the honor code in a "chain of masculine virtue" in which women were viewed as the "weak link" (199). More recent inquiry has focused on whether or not honor and shame are binary opposites of an ideological construct (Wikan 1984; Abu-Lughod 1986).

The elemental core aspects of the honor and shame constructs have survived throughout time and changes in the Middle East. One reason for the persistence and pervasiveness of the honor and shame constructs in the Middle East may be due to an inherent quality of the ideological constructs themselves: transmutability - the ability to cause change in form, nature or substance. Other researchers have recognized and discussed some aspects of the mutability

quality in reference to the 'honor construct' and the changing roles of women. Dodd (1973) found two sources of change were contained within Arab nations engaged in political revolution: mobilization of all societal members; and emergence of a new ideology, supplanting the old (51). Both changes affected honor and modesty codes wherein the code could be "suspended" during war, or "radically revised or even abolished" in the rise of a new society (Dodd 1973:51). These modifications occurred within a Middle Eastern context. The Canadian context reveals shame and honor constructs are undergoing a transmutation, given the different prevailing ideology of the 'female', specifically, female sexuality.

Defining Honor: *'Ird*

Two Arabic terms are commonly used to refer to honor: *sharaf* and *'ird*. *Sharaf* is honor in the broader sense; *'ird* is family honor based on female sexual conduct; specifically, a man's sisters and daughters.[6] Courtship, marriage and sexual knowledge transmission are the contextual focus of this thesis, thus the relevant aspect of honor hereinafter referred to is *'ird*. Female sexual misconduct which becomes public knowledge, and therefore scandal, *fadiha*, results in tainted *'ird*. Tainted *'ird* disgraces the family name, creating serious ramifications for the family in many aspects of life.[7]

Traditionally, redeeming the family name and honor, *'ird*, was an obligation placed upon the shoulders of male members of the offending female's family. Redemption of *'ird* was traditionally achieved through committing "honor murder".[8] Abou-Zeid (1966) says *'ird*, once lost cannot be regained (256). However "honor-murder" was an act that in fact did remove the taint from *'ird* and regain the family's name and honor. In fact many respondents commented that a sentiment still expressed today among some Arabs currently residing (and more

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[6] The wife who commits an act of sexual misconduct yields less shame on her husband than on her paternal and maternal male relatives. The shame a husband would bear is decreased because he can divorce his wife detaching himself from her permanently, not so with her father and brothers (Al-Khayyat 1990:24).

[7] See pages 27-28.

[8] Respondents indicated that traditionally, when an act of *'aar* (severest form of shame a female can perform, and always connected to sexual misconduct) was committed by a female within one's own family, male family members gathered to decide who will be the one to reclaim the family's *'ird*. Redeeming family honor, *'ird*, was achieved through murdering the offending female. Typically it was the offending female's patrilateral parallel cousin who was obligated to reclaim the family's "good" name, as traditionally her lineage considered him to be her preferential choice of husband. See also: Deardon 1976:4; Al-Khayyat 1990:35.

so in the past) in various Middle Eastern countries, is that men who followed through with such an action were praised by community members for performing an action which displays 'honor before blood'.[9]

Nevertheless, uncontrolled female sexual conduct represented a potential source of damage to family honor, *'ird*. It is the one aspect males could not control completely - whether the female herself stepped outside the boundaries of the modesty code, for example, through sexual intercourse prior to marriage or adultery; or whether a male contributed to the violation of the codes, for example, seducing a female to sexual intercourse prior to marriage, or rape. Thus, female sexuality is the Achilles' Heel of the honor and shame construct.

Defining Shame

> "Shame" has been defined as a matter between a person and his society, while "guilt" is primarily a matter between a person and his conscience. A hermit in a desert can feel guilt; he cannot feel shame. (Ausubel cited in Patai 1983:106)

Within the Christian Arab Canadian community three words were used to refer to an act of shame: *'eyb*, *khuzy* (sometimes dialectical differences occurred, such as *khajal*) and *'aar*. These three terms refer to acts of shame that range from 'misdemeanors' to 'humiliation' to the 'forbidden', respectively. According to respondents, *'eyb* and *khuzy*, theoretically can be applied to both genders, although neither term was ever heard to be directed at a male; all three terms were used solely in reference to female misconduct. In reference to females, *'eyb* is immodesty and refers to a host of misdemeanors. *'Eyb* could be a breach of the modesty dress code, such as clothing which is "too revealing". It could also be any form of self-expressive or self-assertive behavior (which is viewed as inappropriate for females and not "ladylike"): speaking loudly; laughing loudly; expressing opinions; or sitting with legs crossed. Speech restrictions regarded as *'eyb* include language usage: swearing or sexual topics and terminology, for example the terms menstruation or ejaculation.

Although *'eyb* is an act considered "not good", disgrace does not accompany the act. Respondents referring to *'eyb* reported:

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[9] Al-Khayyat reports this to be a Bedouin custom originally and is referred to as "washing off the shame" 1990:216 (note 5).

"You may not even be gossiped about for performing *'eyb*". (M1G1)

"*'Eyb* is not bad enough to have fingers pointed at you". (M2G1)

"The act is bad, but she will not be shot for it". (M3G1)

In Canada, *'eyb* may be viewed as a term attributable to behaviors which are classed as misdemeanors in most cases.[10] Traditionally, and still to be found among some *traditional* Christian Arab-Canadian families, it is considered *'eyb* for a female, especially unmarried, to sit on the front porch of their house in full view of passersby because she can "be seen".[11]

Khuzy, means an act of shame which causes humiliation to the actor. Both males and females can commit *khuzy*. The severest form of shame a Christian Arab Canadian male can commit is *khuzy*. Examples of acts considered to be *khuzy* are lying and stealing. In the area of courtship, marriage and sexuality, a male who commits an act of adultery or has illegitimate children, may or may not be judged as having committed an act of *khuzy*. The same acts committed by a female do not fit in this category; rather a female adulterous would be guilty of *'aar*.

'Aar is a term used to denote an act representing "severe shame". To commit an act of *'aar* is viewed as a severe infraction of the sexual behavioral codes imposed upon females and means disgrace. *'Ird* can only be tainted through an act of *'aar*, which can only be committed by a female. Yet, the consequences of *'aar* affects the entire family and its name.[12] An unmarried

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[10] Note its usage varies in other geographic settings. Among the poor in Cairo, Wikan (1984) found *'eyb* to be a common term employed constantly, and referred to a broader range of actions, from misdeeds to the "horribly immoral" (636).

[11] The main concern here stems from an old traditional belief, considered old-fashioned today, in which the aim is to keep the daughter "a virgin both outside and inside", i.e., a virgin from both "talk and look", as well as sexually. As one first generation Lebanese male clarifies, "a virgin is not only 'not having sex'. A virgin is a virgin - not even being looked at, and absolutely no contact with the opposite sex - so nobody has seen or touched you. A virgin means, nobody has talked to you, or seen you".

[12] Many first generation respondents reported how a long time ago, the shame from an act of *'aar* was inherited by the next generation in one's family. If one's grandmother committed an act of *'aar*, such as adultery, her children and grandchildren bore the stigma of her *'aar*. No matter how proper the grandchild's conduct, the grandmother's act of *'aar* would be constantly "thrown in one's face". "We are not like you, your grandmother is a bitch, she slept with so and so". Another term, *bellasharaf*, means a "family that has no honor" or "they are dishonored". This term was used to refer to any and all families who had committed shameful acts which had become public

female who becomes pregnant, has committed an act of *'aar*. Historically, this is an act that would have warranted the death of the female. In fact, some respondents claimed, that even in North America today, the institution known as "honor murder" still exists to cope with such infractions.[13]

Respondents reported that typical examples of *'aar* are: unmarried pregnant female; unmarried female who delivers a baby; female who is non-virgin on her wedding night (excluding divorcees and widows who remarry); adultery; one who elopes with a man (assumed lover); interreligious marriage between Christian Arab and Muslim Arab;[14] or divorce.[15] Both being pregnant and delivering a baby out of wedlock are still considered the severest acts of *'aar*. However, in the Canadian context responses to these acts have changed considerably in most cases.

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knowledge, causing *fadiha*, and were to be avoided. The range of avoidance encompassed all familial, social, marital, and business transactions with the offending families.

[13] Many first generation respondents yielded stories of the following nature. Today, in North America, a female who has committed an act of *'aar* will approach police informing them of her situation and fear of expected traditional consequences. The implication being, should anything "happen" to her the police need not look beyond the males in her family to discover the cause of her demise; at the same time, she is gaining legal protection for herself. Police inform family members of their awareness of the situation, and warn the family to refrain from taking any action toward the offending female or someone will go to prison. The family will "elect" someone to perform the "honor murder". In some cases the chosen male is willing to go to prison for committing the act as "as long as they wipe the *'aar*". But usually informing the police works as a deterrent against the girl's male family members taking traditional measures to restore family honor. Instead, other methods, less drastic, are being employed. For example, public announcements of disownment. By placing a statement in the newspaper publicly disowning the female from the family name, *'ird* is restored. Today in North America among (Christian) Arab Canadian communities, there are acts which are still considered *'aar* and which once committed, are still believed to cause tainted *'ird* as a result. Depending upon the particular perceptual stage of acceptance or rejection of these acts as *'aar* by individual families, in particular male members of the family, "honor murder" may still be considered a necessary way of redeeming family honor.

[14] The connection between an inter-religious marriage, *'aar* and sexuality is as follows. Traditionally, an inter-religious marriage was (and still occurs today to some degree both in the Middle East and Canada) opposed by both sides of the concerned families. Being 'in love' was not given consideration as criterion for marriage. Thus in an inter-religious marriage it was assumed "he probably ruined her", that is, the couple had sexual intercourse while still unmarried. Because the couple knows they will not receive permission from either family to marry, the only option available is to run away together. "If they are caught they will be killed eventually". Today inter-religious marriage between a Christian and a Muslim Arab is no longer considered *'aar*. However, within the sample population, it is still considered undesirable and unacceptable as a marital match.

[15] Divorce (if initiated by the female, is seen as an assertive action on her part insulting her husband) is losing its association with *'aar*, except among *traditional* families. Generally speaking, it has decreased in its rank of negativity, but has not completely dissolved in being viewed as an act of shame.

Consequences of Shame: The Role Of *Fadiha*

Fadiha means "to open", "to expose", "to declare". In relation to shame, it means "scandal". Specifically, it means that someone (and eventually the whole Arab community) has become aware of one's particular act(s) of shame, one's 'disgrace' which was secret and has now become exposed. The individual's shame is now public knowledge. One respondent referring to *fadiha* states:

> It is the national Enquirer! Of course in the telling of *fadiha* 'your particular acts are exaggerated', and even if you are *sharafi,*[16] it is difficult to claim your innocence, as either no one will listen; or you will not be believed. (F1G1)

Consequences of shame can be quite devastating, historically more so than today, in the Middle East more so than in other geographic regions where Arab immigrant populations exist. Historically, many people, especially females, have no doubt lost their lives as a result of *fadiha*. Initial responses to an act of shame in all cases brings gossip - an enormously effective form of social control, especially for a culture which is so "other-determined" and "outward-oriented" in their value system.

An Arab person accused of committing an act of shame, or who has committed an act of shame, can suffer deeply through being disowned by both the immediate and extended family and ostracized by the Arab community. The range of influence extends to many, if not all, aspects of a person's life. As a result both contact and support can be lost: familial, social, marital, and economic. In addition, status and position will be diminished in the eyes of the Arab community. Conceivably this leaves the individual in a state of physical and psychological isolation; the individual becomes an "outcast". The basis for this psychological turmoil and devastation experienced by individuals can be attributed to the "other-oriented" characteristic which Nordenstam[17] attributed to the Arab value system of honor, and which this researcher includes in the *construct of shame*.

Instead of a personal valuation determined by oneself, this outward orientation empowers others to pass judgment on the individual's own sense of self-worth, and their worth within the community. Not only can this affect all aspects of the life of an individual, but also the lives of other family members. Traditionally, and even today in some - especially rural - areas of the Middle

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[16] *Sharafi* means innocent.

[17] See Patai 1983:101

East, this can be a devastating experience to endure, particularly for a female, as historically and geographically speaking, there was "no where to run".[18]

Given the foregoing consequences one would have to endure (if the female managed to live to endure them), it is understandable why an initial family response is to "conceal" an act of shame. This is usually only successful if the act itself has not become *fadiha*. The most difficult act to conceal is the unmarried female who has delivered a baby. The baby is physical evidence difficult to hide. Thus it is fear of *fadiha*, scandal - which results from public exposure of an offending act - which in turn brings a host of devastating consequences in its disclosure, that is a substantial influence over most decision-making. It is the impetus driving Arab cultural ideals of honor (*'ird*) and shame. Patai (1983), focusing in the same direction, said:

> What pressures an Arab to behave in an honorable manner is not guilt but shame, or more precisely, the psychological drive to escape or prevent negative judgment by others. (106)

Wikan (1984), in Cairo, also found the same:

> In everything they do, people are forced to consider 'What will people say?', and by this they do not mean 'How will people evaluate and judge?' but 'How might they condemn and distort?' This means that everyone is judged by some significant others to be blemished by shame and...these verdicts are publicly spoken. (636)

Dissolving Shame

Can an act of shame be forgiven and erased?[19] A number of factors must be considered to answer this question. First, historically and geographically in

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[18] Today in Canada, ostracization can and does occur among family members and among friends within the (Christian) Arab Canadian community, yet options for coping with such consequences have widened in scope. A person if he/she chooses, or if he/she finds continued living within the Arab community unbearable, can either sever all contact with the community and associate with non-Arabs (especially Canadians who are perceived as "minding their own business", and "do not care what the next guy is doing"), and/or they can physically move to another city and start a new life where no one knows them.

[19] A common belief held by the Christian Arab Canadian sample population is that Muslim Arabs and Muslim Arab Canadians were and are "unforgiving". Christian Arab Canadian respondents viewed forgiveness as a Christian concept - one that differentiated Muslims from Christian

the Middle East there was little "room" for forgiveness of acts of shame. Many acts of *'eyb* and *khuzy* were probably overlooked and forgiven, especially those committed by males. Acts of *'aar* would not have warranted such generosity and would have been the rare exception - and only if the following existed: 'timely measures of concealment' that could have taken place prior to the act becoming *fadiha*; and only if attitudes of family members, especially the father, were 'liberal' enough to warrant nontraditional expected cultural responses. If *'aar* was already *fadiha* the odds were against the offending individual, even if the family wanted to forgive the act. The cultural expectation to redeem tainted *'ird* demanded retribution. The community would be 'standing by' to confirm retributive action was taken.

Thus, perceptions of severity of the act, as well as the potential to suppress the act from becoming public knowledge, determines whether or not an act of shame could be hidden, forgiven and dissolved. In the past, there was strict adherence to cultural ideals of shame, and forgiving an act of shame was not part of that cultural ideal.

INSTITUTIONS OF TRADITIONAL COURTSHIP AND MARRIAGE IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Introduction

Traditionally in the Middle East there was a time in which contact between unmarried, *unrelated* males and females was prohibited. In fact, only sixty years ago in rural Palestine this was still observed. There was no dating and courtship at that time, as we know it in the West. Instead, the age-old tradition of arranged marriages was commonplace. Unmarried, *unrelated* males and females did not experience contact with one another.

Chaperoning

Chaperoning is an age-old courtship institution which reinforced the suppression of female sexuality and reduced interaction between the sexes.

Arabs, especially in relation to acts of shame. Thus it is believed that Christians had it "in their heart" to forgive an act of shame, whereas Muslims would adhere without alteration to cultural expectations of retribution. Therefore, consequences suffered by the Muslim female would be more devastating than those suffered by the Christian female.

Chaperones are persons, usually relatives, either female or male, who accompany an unmarried Arab girl whenever she leaves the house, or when in the company of unrelated males. The purpose of chaperoning is for safeguarding the reputation of a girl. The main concern was to ensure an avoidance of shameful behavior on the part of the unmarried daughter or sister which could destroy the family's *'ird*. Three of the most typical reasons given by respondents for the employment of a chaperone are as follows:

- Unmarried males and females who were not engaged and who were alone together in public, automatically generated *fadiha*. Engaged couple's on the other hand, could be together in public without causing scandal if they are chaperoned.

- If a couple's engagement has broken-up it will generate *fadiha* if the couple has ever been alone together without a chaperone. It will be assumed the reason for the break-up was due the man discovering that there is "something wrong" with the girl. This decreases her opportunities to find another suitor for marriage as, "no other man will want her either".

- The girl's naiveté and ignorance of sexuality increases the potential of vulnerability to both her and her family, as it was feared she could easily be seduced. "This is the reason for the chaperone, she can say, 'no, they were never alone'". The chaperone is a protective device, a 'witness' who can bear public testimony of the girl's honorable behavior when in the company of an unrelated, unmarried man.

Institution of Middle Eastern Engagement

Traditionally, "engagement" meant something very different in the Middle East than it does today. *Khutbah*, the term used to refer to "engagement" by respondents in the sample population, means "to talk in relation to somebody", "to give a speech", "to make a speech". Traditionally, *khutbah* is the actual discussion occurring between the prospective suitor and the father of the girl.

A future son in-law was responsible for all wedding costs, providing the marital home, and whatever parents asked for in bridewealth.[20] However, some

[20] Bridewealth is a customary gift which is given to the wife and her kin, from the husband and his kin, at the time of marriage (or before or after). It is a compensatory gift to the bride's group for the loss of her companionship, labour and offspring.

men (or boys, some married quite early themselves) did not have the necessary marital resources at the time of wanting to marry. Thus an agreed upon period of time was allotted for the future son-in-law to acquire the required bridewealth. This period of gathering the necessary resources was referred to as the 'period of engagement' for the couple. The length of the period of engagement typically varied from one week to two years.[21]

Mate Selection

Traditionally, three typical settings occur in which a suitor may find himself:

> ***The known suitor:*** a male suitor who resides in or near the same village as the intended bride and is either the preferred patrilateral parallel cousin, or a male from a known family.
>
> ***The unknown suitor with connections:*** a male suitor who is unknown to the girl's family, however both parties know a third family.
>
> ***The unknown suitor without connections:*** a male suitor who is unknown to both, the girl's family or families in the village and surrounding areas.

The *known suitor* is preferred. In fact, the preferred marriage is between the children of two brothers. This is known as patrilateral parallel-cousin marriage and is an age-old tradition of marital preference.[22] It is widely practiced among societies of the Middle East and North Africa, in particular among Arabs. It was considered a "right" and an "obligation"[23] of a young Arab man to marry his father's brother's daughter (Patai 1983:93). This is not to say that any 'outside marriages' did not occur, they did. But before an unknown suitor from outside the extended family received permission to marry a girl within the

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[21] Many times, newlywed couples who did not have a house of their own, would reside with the groom's parents. As a result of this post-marital residential opportunity available to young couples, the engagement period was shorter in duration.

[22] There were two cousin marriages in the sample population.

[23] This obligation, sometimes placed an unwanted burden on young men, as one respondent states, "if an Arab girl is not receiving any marriage offers, for whatever reasons, her first cousin was obligated to marry her".

'group', all cousins of the girl were approached and asked if they wanted this girl as their wife.[24] If no one wanted her, then the man asking for her hand in marriage could have her as his wife if the parents approved. The girl had neither voice nor choice in these marital arrangements. Refusal on her part would have been unthinkable, as parental authority was absolute.

Males seeking a bride, whether they were kinsmen of the girl or not, had certain criterion to be met: similar socio-economic standing, a "good" family background, and the number and composition of the prospective girl's family members. The most desirable girl came from a family large in numbers; having many males.[25] Marriage to a female from such a family represented a potential source of reproductive fruitfulness, and strength, and was a factor given much consideration by males, and their families, during the process of selecting a bride. In addition, the female had to meet certain standards in order to be considered an acceptable bride. She must be a virgin on her wedding night, modest in behavior, dress, and self-expression; uphold the limits of mobility imposed on her; be a "good" householder;[26] and adhere to male authority.

The ***known suitor*** did not require any background investigation because "everybody knows everybody" so information regarding the suitor was either already known, or could be easily obtained. In the second setting, the ***unknown suitor with connections*** although a stranger, has verifiable sources of information (the known third party) available and easily obtainable by the families. In the third setting, the ***unknown suitor without connections*** becomes more difficult. For this reason, the procedures involved deserve to be explained more fully.

A male visitor to a village might see a girl who intrigued him while she was abroad in the village with her chaperone, or perhaps on a family errand. Considering the customary seclusion of young women, physical appearance was usually the only criteria these males had to judge a potential bride. Having 'caught his eye', she would become the subject of inquiries by him. This in itself

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[24] The 'oldest' first cousin had first choice of the girl. If he was "taken" or "not interested", then choice goes to the "second one in line, if necessary". As one first generation Palestinian respondent explains: "She is brought up that one of these cousins will be your husband, so usually their relationship is like that of a brother because she sees him going in and out of her house. She understands he will choose one of them (herself or her sisters). So either the first, second, third one, or the one who is close to her age. Maybe it will be a third or fourth cousin who will marry her. If there are two sisters, both fathers talk, and they say, 'let's marry both of them to our two sons'. They will love this!". With regard to the latter, Granqvist (1931) confirms bride exchange in Palestinian villages were a common occurrence. A common reason cited for this was "we do not want to send our property to strangers" (113).

[25] Patai (1969) also confirms this finding.

[26] Davis (1983) reports "...a messy household suggests also a looseness in a woman's moral character" (29).

could be a confusing experience for the man due to deception and defamation of the girl's character by families seeking to draw the male suitor toward their own daughters:

> If a guy likes a girl he will make inquiries about her. He will ask what people think of her. When he did not know who the person was, inquiries were made about her family. 'How is the environment of her family? Does she go out? Are her parents beggars? Do they have anything? People will say things like 'I heard she runs around' and they put God in the middle, 'but that's between her and God'. So now the person has doubts. They do this on purpose so the guy will marry their own girls. 'Why go there when we have girls here'? When an eligible guy comes around, they grab him. They bad mouth the girl that he was interested in. (F2G1)

The potential suitor might follow up by sending a representative to the girl's family to arrange a specified time for a 'formal visit' - with the explicit purpose of considering the 'girl in question' as a potential wife. During this 'formal meeting', the suitor (and/or any of his female relatives or representatives who have accompanied him) may make direct inquiries to the intended bride, who serves him coffee. But this is mostly small talk, and hardly the way to acquire information on a prospective wife. So how does a male suitor acquire information on a girl he is interested in as a wife? Indirectly, through subtle behavior, the potential bride's female relatives will implicitly disclose and transmit the required information to the suitor, (and to those who have accompanied him) who perceives and understands the inherent meanings. For example, the potential bride's female relatives will make comments to convey the girl's domestic skills, for example, cooking:

> Try one of these cookies (girl's name) has made them. (F3G1)

or

> Please eat some more of this meal, (girl's name) helped cook it. (F1G1)

or, to indicate her sewing skills, an aunt may remark:

> These lovely linens displayed around the house have been embroidered and crocheted by the girl. (F4G1)

In addition, the male suitor (and those who have accompanied him) will observe the girl's body language: gestures, movements and mannerisms, in order to determine her degree of modesty.

> Of course the men and women do not sit together. If he wanted to ask the girl something, the father would tell the wife to bring the girl, both would be properly dressed, and the two females would come and sit in the room on the floor. The girl will either stare at the floor or occasionally glance at the suitor. (F3G1)

For the girl to stare at him would have been completely inappropriate behavior, considered "cheeky", and unquestionably would have lost the suitor's interest - one of the ploys no doubt many Arab women used to rid themselves of unwanted suitors. During this 'formal' visit, the girl's father questions the suitor to discover his financial security and prospects, and his family background. An example of the questioning process is as follows:

> Do you work? What do you do for a living? Do you own land? How many brothers and sisters do you have? Do they depend on you for financial support? When are your intentions of getting married? (F2G1)

Whereupon the father then tells the suitor he will let him know his answer. If the girl's family decides they do not want the suitor, for whatever reasons, the following is a typical response given by the girl's family:

> The family will send word back stating, 'thank you very much we are honored, but we cannot because she is either already spoken for, or she is engaged'; or there is to be no destiny between your son and our daughter. (F5G1)

or they will increase the bridewealth asked for, in order to deter him:

> Sometimes the girl's relatives will demand a high payment for their daughter's hand in marriage if they do not like the guy, knowing that he will be unable to meet their demands. In which case he'll respond by saying, 'I am sorry I cannot afford that and I will look elsewhere for someone else'. (F3G1)

If the suitor seems acceptable on the other hand, her families' investigative process (verification of the information received by and about the male suitor) then occurs. If all was in order, and the suitor was acceptable, a messenger from the girl's family's would relay the reply regarding the proposal.

Najjar (1992) reporting on a study of life histories she conducted on Palestinian women in Israel, states that "in arranged marriages, the main criteria was (and is) the reputation of the families involved and similarity of socio-economic status" (21). She further states that:

> The force of social pressure for marriage in small communities means that families sometimes ... accept unsuitable husbands for their daughters. Most parents take great pains to investigate the background and character of prospective spouses, but the old argument the parents chose more wisely than inexperienced girls often proves fallacious. (1992:21)

The motivating factor behind decisions parents make regarding mate-selection for their children is not based on whether the child would be happy, in love with, or most compatible choice of mate. Moreover, the stated preference for a parallel cousin; a good reputation of the future son-in-law's family and background; and similarity of socio-economic status of prospective mates - tends to be more indicative of the ideal than the real.[27] In reality, other factors bear comparable or greater weight as criteria in parental decision-making concerning mate-selection for daughters.

Contrary to the belief that "most parents take great pains to investigate the background and character of prospective spouses" and " in case of conflict or bad treatment, they intervene" (Najjar 1992:21), findings in this study revealed many "horror" stories of kin, friends, neighbors and community members, who performed only superficial inquiries on male suitors; in many cases causing harm and injury to the girl, in some instances, she escaped with her barely her life. One respondent, relating how a man from another village approached her father for her sister's hand in marriage, reported:

> The first person he[28] encountered warned him, 'don't marry him because he is crazy, there is something wrong with him'. My father did not believe him because he thought this person was giving him false information because he was

[27] Davis' (1983) study of women's lives in the Moroccan village, Sidi Embarek, reports that of 24 marriages only 3 marriages had related spouses, in 21 cases the partners were unrelated (27).

[28] The reference here is to the girl's father.

> interested in my sister himself. The second person he encountered recommended the suitor. My father decided to agree to the marriage. This decision turned out to be wrong. He beat her terribly continuously. She came back to the family begging our father to do something about him, that she 'could not continue to live like this'. Eventually she ran away and stayed at my cousin's house. She eventually got a divorce. My father has great regret about this, that he made this mistake. (F4G1)

Another respondent relates similar conditions surrounding the parental decision-making of marriage for her cousin:

> My cousin was very beautiful. A man from another village approached her family and asked for her hand in marriage. Because the man was a professional, he was nice, from a "good family", had good financial prospects, a big house. Like you cannot check anymore because that's what you see. They went to the house, they checked everything. Like nobody knew he was so jealous. She could not even say hello to my father which was like her father, because we lived next door to each other for 50 years. She was like one of my own sisters, we did everything together.
>
> But he kept beating her up and he wouldn't let her come to the family. He wouldn't let anybody come to her house to see her. She would come, and you could see she was terrified, scared of him, because as soon as they leave, he would beat her again and again. Until one day her brothers had enough of this. Because everytime she ran away, she came to the village and told her dad, 'please do something because I cannot live like this anymore'. Her father would not take her back because the husband will come and the husband will bring his *right* and say 'she is not doing her job'. He would lie to the father and 'she is not keeping the house clean', or whatever. The father would say 'he is your husband, you have to go back to your husband'.
>
> That is the reason why most of them[29] will marry anybody, because they wanted to get out of the house from the father. But it is like jumping out of the frying pan into the fire. Eventually she managed to run away from him and divorce him. (F6G1)

These incidences are not that antiquated, as one respondent relates it was only 20 years ago in Lebanon that this was still occurring:

[29] The reference here is to 'girls'.

> My girlfriend she did not like school. When she was only 15 she was looking for a way to 'get out'. An Arab man who came from Australia for a wife, he was 37 at the time, approached her family. The family agreed to the marriage without any investigation into the man because they thought if he came from overseas, he must be rich. She married him. It turned out to be a bad decision. He left her and returned to Australia and lived with another woman for years while still married to her. She had two kids by him. She eventually divorced him and raised those kids by herself. (F5G1)

Respondents stated many families made impetuous marital decisions regarding unmarried daughters, especially those perceived as "older", even when forewarned prospective suitors may be 'less than acceptable'. The underlying cause motivating parents to be 'less than discriminate' with male prospective suitors results in an undermining of the investigative process which should have been extensive regarding these strangers. The value of information received was minimized or, when negative qualities were discovered they were "not believed", or one "turned a blind eye to them". It is curious, even ironic, that although enormous energy is expended to ensure the female's reputation, she may then be put in jeopardy by the family's desire to see her married as soon as possible.

Institution of Early Marriage

Early marriage, especially for females either pre-pubescent[30] or early teenage years, is an age-old practice[31] in the Middle East and Africa. It was common practice for girls to be married between ages 12 and 16. One respondent expresses the antiquated, yet still prevalent (in some Middle Eastern countries) sentiment regarding females, age, marriage and interaction between the sexes:

> You are viewed old enough to marry but you are not old enough to be alone with a man, because they were afraid of what people will say. (F4G1)

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[30] See Davis 1983; Makhlouf 1979; Najjar 1992; Patai 1983.

[31] It was only in 1956 in Tunisia that it became illegal to marry girls before the age of 15, which has since been raised to 17 (McDermott 1976:9). In Syria and Turkey, minimum age for marriage is 18 for males, 17 for females; in Egypt, 18 for males and 16 for females (Patai 1969:102). McDermott (1976:9), Patai (1969:102), and Davis (1983:28) report there is still a gap between the laws and what is actually occurring in practice.

One respondent whose mother married at age thirteen, recalls a conversation between them, in which she asked her mother what she did all day as a married woman at age 13:

> What did you do all day when dad went to work? 'We got all the young brides together and went and played all day till one of them reminded us it was time to go home because the husbands are coming'. (F3G1)

Any girl who was not married by age 16 was cause for parental concern; an unmarried girl who had reached the age of 20[32] was considered a "prune" with either no, or severely reduced, marital prospects:

> The family tries to get daughters married by age sixteen. When she is past age 20, 21, the father **'CANNOT STAND'**[33] to have his daughter around in the house. So they will get anybody to marry their daughter, even lie to themselves about the guy being good, they will take anybody to marry the daughter. They do not want to be stuck with their daughters. They try, especially the fathers because he takes charge, he doesn't want to have daughters around in the house if they are in their 20's. They are ok if they are not married until a certain age, like 16. (M3G1)

> After the girl is 20 no one asks for her hand in marriage. So if a man passes by and asks for her, the father will not hesitate to marry her to him. It is the fear to have a daughter, especially who is 20 still staying at home - even still today in the Middle East. The fear of having a daughter staying at home is that the father thinks he will be responsible for her. 'I do not want to see my daughter in this house'. After she is 20, they are not too choosy. This is very strong in the Middle East, more so in the past, but still today it happens, even in the cities. (M1G1)

> They always say 'a woman's place is in the home'. I mean this was the thought until only 20 years ago. They thought, 'she has nobody, no place to go, we will always take care of her, she will always be our daughter, but if she is not married, what will she do after we die, who will take care of her?' This was always the worry about who will take care of her. She is better off if she is married to anyone and have her own home, and so they will marry her to a very simple

[32] Davis (1983) also reports finding this belief in the Moroccan study, "girls are still regarded as likely to be old maids if they are not married by the time they are 20" (28).

[33] Bold print hereinafter is used to indicate the text was spoken with a loud voice.

> man, uneducated man. Although she could be 10 times smarter than him, but if she is not 16 anymore, maybe she is 16, 17 or 19, because by the age of 22, she is an old maid. She has to be married early. If there isn't enough men around in the village, so if some stranger sees her and wants her, or somebody told him about her, that's how they get rid of her. (M4G1)

Why were these girls being married off at such an early age in the first place? Unmarried "older" daughters living at home bring stress and shame to the family to bear, as it is perceived by the community that "there is something wrong with the girl", thus "no man will want her". Under such conditions, rumors begin to flourish about the unmarried girl, destroying her chances for any suitor to ask for her hand in marriage. One respondent speaking about the power of *fadiha* in relation to an unmarried "older" girl, states:

> Not only does the father fear that his daughter will not be married, but he fears the 'talk' that it will generate, especially in rural areas. The unmarried daughter will be 'talked about'. Even if this girl has nothing wrong with her, it's too late, she will never marry, because it is assumed that the reason she is not already married is that there is something wrong with her. So no one will ask for her now. Once rumors start spreading in rural areas, that's it for the girl. So it is the fear of the 'outside' to the family that affects their psychology. Once rumors start, I do not think that this will be a girl who will ever marry. Because the reason is, if a girl has nothing wrong with her she would be married at the age of 16, so there *must* be something wrong with her. (M2G1)

In fact, the *REAL* decision-making process may be pushed rather far from the ideal. Why? The casual factors were both economically and ideologically rooted, and played out within the institution of 'early marriage'. All first generation respondents confirmed the followng description of these factors.

Economic Criteria

One incentive for parents to marry off daughters while still quite young was economically driven. Many families were large; it was not uncommon, even thirty years ago, to find many Arab families which had eight to fifteen children. The economic pressure for families having low economic resources to draw upon, many children to feed and care for, not to mention other extended family members residing within the family home, is considerable. Where girls did not contribute to family food production, or income in rural and urban middle class

families, this pressure was also great. As a consequence many daughters were given in marriage "hastily" to the "first suitor who knocked at the door".

Marrying off daughters as soon as possible was not uncommon, as it could bear a twofold financial blessing: first, there would be "one less mouth to feed", easing financial burdens on the family; and second, if they found a husband who has "bright financial prospects" or was already a prospective "good catch" (financially), it was believed some of the good financial fortune would "rub off" on the girl's parents.

> My neighbor, she was forced to marry a man, he was 35 and she was only 15. He was mean, but he was rich. That's all the parents cared about, 'how much money does he have?' He pretended to be nice. But after they married he was very cruel to her. She was never allowed out of the house, she wasn't allowed to visit anyone, and no one could visit her, except her family. You knew she was unhappy because she always sat there sad, never said a word, and she had many bruises on her face. After marriage, there is nothing you can do for the girl. (F6G1)

> Money is always first. If you have money, then it doesn't matter what kind of person you are, whether you are good or not. They will 'go for it'. (M3G1)

There was an awareness that suitors could also be in a modest financial position themselves, the eligible bachelor need not be financially secure at the time of seeking a bride. As long as he could provide for the daughter, it was still one less mouth for the family to feed, as one respondent makes clear:

> If a guy has no money, but he is healthy so he can work, they will be glad because he can provide for her just as much as we can provide for her. They will marry the first daughter, then work on the second daughter who is in line to get married. They will not marry the younger daughter before the older daughter, even if she is prettier or has lots of guys asking for her hand in marriage. The guy himself will hunt for another guy for his future bride's sister, so he can get married. There were rules and regulations set by the parents. They do not care if he has no money, because few people had money. (F2G1)

Given the relative poverty in the rural areas, suitors who either had, or exhibited the potential to have, financial security, or even suitors simply able to support a wife in most likely a comparable manner as her family, met one criteria in mate-selection decision-making by parents.

Ideologically Driven Psychological Pressures

A second drive motivating parents towards early marriage of daughters was the psychological pressure (consisting of many components) exerted from the Middle Eastern ideology of the 'virgin female'.

> If the girl was not a virgin when she married she was taken back to her parents because she was not clean. (F5G1)

The energy expenditure required to display and maintain the presentation of an intact and clean reputation for each of one's daughters (and sisters), was exhausting.[34] "Be a lady" "act like a lady" were phrases every Arab female respondent grew up hearing. These phrases defined the boundaries of female behavior to be followed:

> No laughing in public, do not flaunt yourself, sit properly 'like a lady', only speak when you are spoken to and when you speak, speak only in soft tones, no flirting - only cheap women flirt. You must have a good reputation. (F2G1)

An Arab girl's reputation was the only 'ticket' she had for marriage; and it had many points of vulnerability - all capable of causing *fadiha* and destroying her chances of marriage - thus, requiring constant safeguarding. The burden of this guardianship fell almost entirely on the mother. Pressured by the demands of the modesty code, mothers constantly needed to have one eye on their daughters and the other eye on the Arab community - who tended to be waiting eagerly for any unmarried girl to 'slip off the narrow path'. Mothers were held accountable if this happened.

> If the girl does anything wrong, the dad and everyone blames the mom. 'You are the one who didn't raise her right'. So the mom teaches the girl, 'either do this or you will be killed', and 'this is a no no'. If she strays, all the blame goes on the mother. (F1G1)

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[34] After the wedding, other married females, (relatives, friends and neighbors) perform their own 'member checks' on one another to ensure traditional codes of behavior continue to be maintained. This was found to be still prevalent within the (Christian) Arab community in Edmonton among *traditional* women who either do not work outside the home or spend a great deal of time in the home.

Unmarried daughters therefore, exacted an enormous energy expenditure for maintenance of their reputations and behavior. Unmarried "older" daughters, (over age 16) represented *increased* anxiety concerning potential sexual misconduct, or "unexpected sexual bad fortune" (like rape). Respondents reported that however unfounded, if the girl had a tainted reputation, all family members suffer the consequences:

- it can ruin the girl's chances for marriage because it is assumed the girl is not a virgin, or is promiscuous. No man will want her as his wife.
- It can destroy chances for marriage for the girl's sisters. It is presumed that if the sister is, or even suspected of being promiscuous, other sisters will follow suit and be the same. No man will want them for his wife.
- It can damage the chances for marriage for her brothers[35] because it is believed that the man must come from a disrespectful family which supports shameful behavior on the part of daughters and/or sisters. No family will want the man as a husband for their daughters.
- It can ruin the father's reputation as 'head' of the family. It is viewed that he has no control over the women in his household - which is seen as disgraceful, and may affect his economic position. Customers will take their business elsewhere - to a "more respectable and honorable family".
- It is assumed that a man who breaks a marital engagement did so because he found out that she was "probably not a virgin; she was easy. They will make her reputation so bad, no man will marry her".

Marriage was virtually the only acceptable and respectable role open to females; thus reputations of unmarried daughters brought a host of concerns to parents, in particular mothers. The many points of vulnerability in a girl's reputation, hence marital prospects; along with the energy expenditure required to 'cover' these points to maintain a 'flawless reputation', and ensure each daughter's behavior conformed with the presentation which in turn affected the family's reputation, simply was not worth the agony. Early and/or hasty marriages eased and eliminated both the financial and psychological concerns and stress.

[35] Al-Khayyat (1990) reports similar findings (24).

Another cause for concern existed. During the 1960's young men left rural areas for work in urban centers, and other Middle Eastern countries. This created a greater scarcity of suitable young men in rural villages, promoting even greater competition between families for suitors for one's daughters. Male suitors seeking brides in rural areas were in fact, a 'hot commodity'.

This competition for son-in-laws was partially responsible for 'hasty' marital arrangements. People were aware that other families might lie to a potential male suitor. They also might lie about him. Thus, when the girl's kin were forewarned against a particular male, this information was not always heeded, based upon the assumption it might be an attempt by another family to 'grab' a prospective suitor. Consequently, in some cases genuine warnings were mistaken for malicious intent, and the girl was married before it was discovered that the suitor was unsuitable. This made it difficult for parents to distinguish between valid criticism and slander of a potential son-in-law.

In summary then, there were both economic and psychological pressures involved in arranging *early* marriages for daughters in the Middle East. The material costs of upkeep, the emotional cost of safeguarding reputations and controlling behavior, and competition for prospective suitors, all contributed to a cultural preference for early, and sometimes hasty, marriage of daughters.

Marriage

So finally the stage of marriage is arrived at. Because parents and elder relatives held the right and duty to find and approve marital matches for their sons and daughters and because the girl was prevented from contacting any male except the ones she was most likely to marry, the parental decision was not to be refused by the child.[36] This was true of both male and female children, although as the previous section showed, males did sometimes take an active role in mate selection, they did so bounded by the approval of kinsmen and prospective affines.[37] The position of the female was far more restricted. The

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[36] First generation respondents frequently asserted that in historic Palestine (and then in Israel) and in Lebanon, especially during their parents courtship years (circa late 1940's and prior to this time) a girl would not not even consider contradicting or refusing her father's decision. This was reported to be common until the 1960's. Al-Khayyat reports this is still occurring in Iraq today (1990:61). See also Davis 1983:27; and Maklouf 1979:40 who both speak of the gap existing between the legal right which a girl has to refuse a marriage and the reality of why she does not. See also section: Period of Transition, this chapter, for further details of change occurring during this time period in the area of courtship.

[37] In-laws.

following statements by first generation respondents, were commonly heard in reference to grandmothers, mothers, aunts, cousins, friends and neighbors:

> She had to go with who(m)ever the father said, no matter if he was ugly, old, or had no money. 'This is your husband and you have to go'. (F5G1)

> A man wanted to marry my youngest aunt. He was told she could not be married until her elder sister was married first. The parents did not care who they married the elder daughter to. They just wanted her married. The older daughter felt she was obligated to marry the man her parents quickly picked for her, because her parents kept telling her she was 'preventing her younger sister from getting married'. This was the guilt and shame the parents used on the girl. So she had no choice, she had to marry him. (F4G1)

TRADITIONAL METHODS OF SEXUAL KNOWLEDGE TRANSMISSION

Unmarried Females: Demarcating "Girl" - "Woman" Domains

Traditionally in the Middle East, sex was considered a topic not to be discussed, especially among unmarried females. Why was sex considered a tabu topic among the unmarried female? Unmarried females were considered "girls", the 'uninitiated', whereas, married females were considered "women". The typical ages in which "girls" married, and therefore became "women", were between 12 and 16. Although marriage was the threshold through which "girls" became "women", it is the act of sexual intercourse which initiates the female into "womanhood". Arabs recognize only the institution of marriage as the exclusive acceptable framework in which the sexual act could occur for a female.[38]

A state of total sexual ignorance was maintained until marriage and this had traumatic emotional consequences on young girls. Mothers and daughters simply did not discuss sexuality or any related domains, as "it was uncomfortable", as one respondent reports. "The mom is too close to the situation, no one wants to go and hear about these things". Not even

[38] Females who had sexual intercourse prior to marriage, although considered "harlots", were classified as "women".

'menstruation knowledge' was transmitted from mother to daughter prior to its onset for the daughter.[39] One respondent's story best portrays the menstruation experience typically found among young Arab girls:

> I was not even told about my periods.[40] My sister told me because when she had hers, she was scared to death, and because I was younger than her, she didn't want me to feel that way, so she told me. You are lucky if you have an older sister. But my poor older sister, nobody told her, so she had to find out the hard way. And you **GET REALLY SCARED!** 'What the hell is this blood coming from and why? (F1G1)

Another respondent relates the next learning stage for the young girl:

> Menstruation was never discussed before it happened to the girl. When it did come, the mother knew because the girl went to her. Then she would watch her mother prepare the cloth by washing them every month, so she learned through watching. However, girls who married young did not know anything. (F3G1)

The reasoning behind this is that if girls were kept virginal *in their minds*, they would be virginal in their acts as well. Prepubescent daughters were simply not in the correct category (according to the ideology) to receive the necessary information. In fact, the ideology impedes females receiving any sexual or reproductive knowledge in any preliminary stage; instead, it is always received, 'after' the fact. One first generation respondent explains why mothers did not talk to their daughters regarding menstruation:

> That's part of being a woman and you are not a woman yet, so they won't tell you. But when you have it and you go and ask 'why?', then they tell you. But it's a bit late. (F3G1)

Not only were young girls kept from knowledge of menstruation prior to its onset, they were also kept from knowledge of sexuality before the onset of sexual relations after marriage. An *unmarried* girl entering a room of married women would typically find the room suddenly "hushed". Al-Khayyat (1990) also found this occurring in Iraq, one woman she interviewed reported the following:

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[39] For similar findings reported, see: Al-Khayyat 1990:38.

[40] Kockturk (1992) found similar experiences were expressed among Muslim Turkish women immigrants in Europe (106).

> You know, I used to serve tea or whatever my mother wanted me to serve for visitors, and run out the minute I'd finished, particularly if they were married women. Mother didn't want us to listen to their conversation. We thought these instructions were incontestable. (33)

In the present study, it was found that this practice and ideology still prevails:

> Because I am not married yet ... it is so ingrained in them that when they are speaking, when my mother or father, or mother and aunts are speaking some gossip for example and one of us walks in, they will tend to quiet down. (F1G2)

> I remember distinctly, I would walk into a room and it was 'hushed'. If you questioned them they would say, 'never mind'. They would not answer you or they'd give you some sort of half-baked, half-truth. (F2G2)

There were some exceptions. Occasionally girls were granted a privilege of staying in a room while married women were conversing, thus able to overhear the latest and ongoing gossip:

> You heard people talking. Remember the girls who were gossiping were only 13 to 16 years old when they married - unless they were ugly and no one wanted her. So they heard the gossip, talking - **but no participating in the conversations.** Or, the married women would say, 'shh, there is a young lady here', or if the woman was cheeky, she would say, 'she will do it one of these days, she might as well hear it from us'. (F1G1)

Girls exposed to sexual knowledge transmission during 'kitchen talk', were probably in a minority. If a "girl" was lucky enough to be granted a presence during these conversations, that privilege did not extend to participation in the conversation. For a girl to participate in a conversation would have been viewed as *'aar* - as it would have implied knowledge gained through personal sexual experience. This mindset and practice still continues within the (Christian) Arab Canadian community today, as the following passages make clear:

> **No! No! No!** It's not very good for the "girl" to give any input. It's ok for her to sit down and listen...even if I knew something about what they were saying, and they were not

like my mom or my sister, they would go home and think, 'ok, how does she know that?' (F3G2)

You are never included. If there is some sort of rumors going around about affairs, we[41] are not included. You are not allowed to participate in the gossip because it is assumed you are not sleeping with your boyfriend, and if you piped up with some sort of sexual remark it would make them very uncomfortable. Anytime it revolves around sex you do not have any input into the conversation, and I don't open my mouth and I'm 28. I'm an adult, and I still hesitate to mention things like birth control, anything that refers to sexual. Anything of a sexual nature or sexuality I will not refer to it. I am not in that *category*.[42] I am not suppose to know about it. (F4G2)

Sex Knowledge Transmission Among the Unmarried

When asked the question 'did your parents discuss sex with you?', a typical response was "are you kidding!" So when and how was sexual knowledge transmission occurring *traditionally* among *unmarried* Arabs?

For unmarried males (some married quite young), there were three typical scenarios: either they entered marriage lacking knowledge and physical experience; or, they gathered information from peers (usually dis-information) and from overhearing conversations by other males. Some young men went to prostitutes[43] in nearby towns, or engaged in sexual experiences with other reportedly, non-Arab women. One first generation male respondent referring to his father's attitude with regard to discussing sexuality with his sons, felt it was representative of a shared attitude by many fathers:

Oh No! I would never speak to my father about this. Because in a way he is...to talk about this, you have to talk to an educated person, he wasn't. He was kind of a person I don't think you can talk to about this kind of issue. This is wrong actually, because they[44] all try to avoid this issue. How do they expect their sons to know? They will leave it up to the child. How do they do it, it depends how smart the

[41] The reference here is to unmarried women.

[42] The reference here is to the category of 'woman' as opposed to 'girl'.

[43] Koctruk (1992) reports similar findings: "Most men in Turkey acquire their first sexual experience by visiting prostitutes" (108).

[44] The reference here is to fathers.

> child becomes and, it's difficult. They will say, 'they will learn it'. How? 'They will learn it in the way I did'. They always look at it this way. (M3G1)

Another respondent's perspective on how sex knowledge transmission was occurring for unmarried males:

> I mean it's happening with the younger and younger as they grow up. 'You're not to do this Doug'.[45] But most Arab men are, I wouldn't say 'men', I would say 'young fellows', (laughing) have been with somebody in the old country. I mean it may not be an Arab woman, they might have gone into town and picked a Jewish girl or something, but they've done it, you know. (M5G1)

Which is not to say all unmarried Arab women were virgins. On the contrary, sometimes illegitimate Arab children were born, as two respondents referring to how such a scenario would be handled within the community, state:

> In the old days he would deny it and the girl would be blamed. They would call her a slut, the baby would be given up, or a quiet abortion would be had. If the girl was late with her periods, certain concoctions, remedies, were given to encourage bleeding. There were lots of kids that were born. 'She is bad, she had a baby'. Everyone would talk behind her back. She would be shunned and so would her baby. The baby would be given to nuns. She would grow up with the nuns and end up being a nun. (F1G1)

> If a woman becomes pregnant before she is married even in my time, 1960's, some will ship them to a convent till the baby is born, then the baby is given up for adoption. The baby is never kept. Seldom it ever happened. Somehow the news is always leaked out about the woman. The woman will never marry. She is tainted, no one will ever want her. Seldom marry, if a man's wife is dead and she could be the mother for his children, but she is still considered a 'used person'. (F6G1)

For unmarried females, there was one time 'informally' designated for transmitting sexual knowledge: during her wedding shower - which typically occurs one to two weeks prior to the wedding date. Attending the shower is a gathering of women: relatives, friends and neighbors.

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[45] This comment was spoken to the son who was present during a portion of this interview.

Originally (and reported by respondents to still be practiced as such during the 1960's), the purpose of the shower was to "ready" the bride for her husband by "cleaning" the girl and making her "soft" through "sugaring".[46] In fact, it was a "sugaring party". As each woman is waxing a different part of the body of the bride, they are simultaneously talking to the girl - thus the transmission of sexual knowledge. However, the mother is excluded from this, as there is *no* transmission of sexual knowledge between mother and daughter.

> Some mothers would sit there while discussions were going on, but not that I know of, or ever heard of - a mother who talked to her own daughter. (F3G1)

In most cases this is the first exposure for the girl to any sexual information - bearing in mind a majority of these girls are between the ages of 12 and 16. In fact, as one respondent states:

> Some girls did not even have their periods when they married, not for one or two years yet. (F1G1)

What information is transmitted to the girl? The following excerpts from respondents convey the characteristic teachings of sexual knowledge which are transmitted to unmarried females during the time of their pre-wedding shower:

> 'He'll know what to do'. The women drop hints, some tell the bride directly. (F4G1)

> They will tell her, because you did not have sex before marriage, 'don't be afraid', 'sometimes it hurts, especially the first time'. Because you are so tense you don't know what to expect this guy is going to do, and you don't know how much it is going to hurt. Alot of them would say, 'I'm nervous'. (F3G1)

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[46] "Sugaring" is a term used to refer to a technique of 'waxing off' all body hair. It gets its' name because sugar is the main ingredient used in the hair removal mixture. Many female respondents still do "sugaring". One respondent's statement makes clear the sentiment regarding women in North America who shave instead: "A woman is not suppose to shave, shaving is for men. We laugh at women who shave here. Why shave, it's masculine. Waxing takes longer for hair to grow and it's less hassle. It's cheaper, more efficient and it does the job properly". Likewise, grooms have a similar ritual to the "sugaring" at their wedding shower, the "shaving". A long time ago, the groom was literally shaved by each of the men present at this celebration. However, by the 1960's, a razor blade was no longer used in the razor for shaving. The shaving is representative of leaving the 'old' behind and starting a 'new' life, as well as preparing oneself for the bride.

> During the wedding shower when the girl is being prepared for her wedding, the older women, aunties, they come and give her teachings. They will tell her what her husband will do to her. 'He will sleep with her, touch her', 'it is ok because he is your husband'. Mostly the girls are terrified. They tell her 'it is normal', 'natural', 'not to be afraid', 'it's legal now'. (F6G1)

> 'It's going to hurt a little', because they were not as gentle as they are these days. They will go at it in full force. 'It is your duty to give it to him whenever he wants it'. Each woman will say something so she can comprehend it. (F1G1)

If an Arab girl was lucky enough to have an older sister, or perhaps an older and close girlfriend, she usually benefited from the relationship by gaining information 'ahead' of time. This was sometimes the case for menstruation. Unfortunately, this was frequently at the cost of some traumatic experience the elder sister had to endure, and she would wish to spare her younger sister(s) the same experience. An 'only daughter' was in the worst position, as the girl usually was isolated from much information and emotional support.

In the rural areas, there was no formal (through educational or religious institutions) transmission of sexual knowledge. In addition, many people were illiterate, thus reading material was not an accessible source of information. Informal transmission of sexual knowledge to unmarried women just prior to their status change as a bride, was basically the only informally recognized and accepted means for unmarried[47] females to acquire sexual knowledge prior to marriage - especially until circa 1960's.

Prior to and during the 1960's, unmarried females were a source of emotional support to one another; they were not however much of a source of information to one another regarding sexuality. However, by the 1960's more rural girls were becoming educated, enabling some older sisters to provide books on sexuality to younger sisters.

> My older sister gave me readings for sex. Things my mother would die if she knew I was reading. Girls discussed things among themselves, but we did not discuss to the extent that girls do now 'adays. We discussed feelings, not sexual things. It was kind of embarrassing the discussions between teenagers, we never mentioned the word sex. I never mentioned the word sex until I heard my daughter use the word. (F3G1)

[47] Excluding unmarried females who were sexually active.

Others changes also occurred during the 1960's. Unmarried rural girls began working in nearby towns. This provided exposure to new forms of sexual knowledge. When in town a girl might see many things she would have never been exposed to in rural areas. As the following respondents report. "You overheard conversations of people, you pick up" and "couples would kiss openly in public, a farm girl would not see this". For the rural girl such behavior was outside her perceptual world, "she did not see it, so she did not know it".

Another means of acquiring sexual knowledge in rural areas was due to the fact that most families were poor, living in "small overcramped homes" consisting of usually one large room. Thus many people, sometimes several married couples, slept on mattresses laid on the floor. "Overhearing the parents or another married couple in bed" having sexual intercourse, was another indirect form of sexual knowledge transmission for unmarried males and females. Traditionally for unmarried females, and until circa 1960's, the wedding shower was the only informally sanctioned source of transmission for sexual knowledge. Other forms of sexual information feedback were circumstantial, 'being in the right place at the right time': whether that be overhearing conversations; or being present in a small cramped house when one's parents were having sexual intercourse.

Sex Knowledge Transmission: Among the Married

Typically, females did not work outside the home, hence much time was spent visiting one another. It was during these daily 'coffee sessions' that "women" engaged in sexual knowledge transmission, usually through the form of 'sexual joking' - with ones' husbands' sexual preferences usually being the object of much mocking and bantering.

> Education came after the fact, after you were married. Some would look, some would hear them, 'oh is that it! (surprised) It's over and done with'. (F6G1)

Men were not present during these gatherings, hence it was the only temporal and spatial niche available for females in which to gather and transmit sexual knowledge. Many discussions occurred concerning gynecological problems, contraceptive usage, pregnancy, abortions, infertility, et cetera. It was information shared here that served women by providing new and possibly useful knowledge, thereby assisting one another in coping with their own particular situation. As one respondent stated in reference to how she learned about one contraceptive technique:

> Some women used vinegar. They would soak a cotton with vinegar and they insert it just before intercourse. It acts as a spermicide. An old Armenian woman was telling me this because she didn't want so many kids and she was very fertile, and she said if she didn't use this method she would have 20 kids. And I could not take birth control pills. (F3G1)

Not only was this an information network, but also an emotional safety net. Many women were oppressed in marriage trying to cope with a number of situations which, according to the cultural ideology, left very little room for change, if any. For example, infertility was typically blamed on the female, even though males were usually never medically tested. The possibility of divorce as a consequence of infertility was a real threat - irrespective of whether the Arab woman was Christian or Muslim.

> My husband's uncle married and had no kids. He blamed his wife. He was never tested. He automatically said it was her fault. She consented to another wife. (F2G1)

Many times, these 'coffee sessions' served as a medium for women to express, through humor, occurrences in their daily lives which although they may not be 'happy' about and would like to change, knew they simply would continue as always before. For example, one respondent refers to her husband's constant sexual desires towards her, and the futility of counting by the fertility cycle as a contraceptive technique:

> A lot of us used the 'counting days method'. How can you be careful? What do you count, you know? Why? Because when he wanted it, he wanted it - no matter how much you count! What should you count? (F5G1)

Thus, these 'coffee sessions' provided intellectual feedback and emotional strength and support, which may have been lacking in other areas of their lives.

When we get to the Canadian context today, these 'coffee sessions' still continue as a medium in which sexual knowledge is transmitted. It still retains some of the traditional intent in providing sexual knowledge transmission, and as an emotional support system - especially among the more *traditional* (Christian) Arab Canadian women.

> We give each other examples of 'do this or do that' to try to get our husbands to stay home with us. Our famous saying

> is when we are telling each other about our husbands, 'oh well, what can you do'. (F3G2)

Typically, married males either did not discuss sexuality (the topic being considered personal and uncomfortable), or if at all, it would have been with their wives.

In summary then, there was no formal sex knowledge transmission traditionally in the Middle East. On an informal level, unmarried males typically could be found in three scenarios: without premarital sexual knowledge; with incidental knowledge through peer interaction or overhearing conversations; or knowledge gained through personal experience. Unmarried females acquired sexual knowledge from married women during the "sugaring" process at their own wedding shower. In addition, peers, or elder sisters may have contributed to their knowledge base, more so for menstruation than the actual act of sex. Serendipity (being in the right place at the right time) brought informal sexual knowledge transmission, whether that be incidental knowledge through exposure to observation or overhearing other couples interact.

Today changes are occurring rapidly and, in the view of many respondents who had returned to their home country, some aspects of courtship, marriage and sex knowledge transmission occurring in Middle Eastern countries are viewed as "ahead" of North America.[48]

PERIOD OF TRANSITION

Prior to the 1960's in Israel, the above scenarios were commonplace -- especially in rural areas -- females had no voice and no choice in marital arrangements. Many first generation respondents referred to the period when they were in their late teens and early 20's still living in the Middle East as a time in which there was a 'breakdown of the enforcement' of customs in courtship and marriage. In most cases this corresponded to the 1960's. So frequently was this decade referred to as a time of transition in courtship and marriage in informants' life histories that further research was conducted. The influx of Jewish settlers into historic Palestine prior to 1948 and into Israel following this date brought in a massive Europeon and American influence. By the 1960's the effects of these influences in the region were becoming more manifest. Therefore this time period appears to represent a transition phase in the Middle Eastern institutions of courtship, marriage and sexual knowledge transmission.

[48] See chapter five, section: 'The Frozen Mindset'.

Although many of the traditional institutions of courtship and marriage and associated behavioral practices continued during this time (1960's), it was frequently reported by respondents that there was a breakdown of enforcement which was occurring, especially among families referred to as "more modern" within this Middle Eastern context. Within the institution of arranged marriage, absolute parental authority decreased. Some daughters were now given a voice and a choice in mate-selection. One result of this was that both the preference for, and occurrence of, patrilateral parallel cousin marriages decreased. In addition, age of marriage of females was no longer as early as it had previously been. Respondents reported it was more typical[49] by the 1960's to find girls marrying between the ages of 17 to 20, rather than 12 to 16.

Another change reported by respondents which occurred during the 1960's was a development within the institution of engagement. Engagement changed from being an allotted time period granted by the future father in-law in which to allow the suitor to acquire necessary marital resources, to a time period which enabled the young unmarried couple to "get to know one another". This new development served the purpose of being an informal publicly acknowledged "license" for the unmarried young couple to go out together alone and still have public approval. This prevented the rise of gossip because the act is now occurring within 'accepted social guidelines for courtship'.

However, respondents also reported that this new development did not provide young couples with private "space" as the institution of chaperoning was still operating. This resulted in an increase in secret dating prior to engagement during the 1960's as the following excerpts reveal:

> Usually it was all hidden. We met in a place that nobody will see you, because if it gets to the family, you are in big trouble. I dated my husband secretly for over one year, then I said, 'Well, you have to decide'. We were both young, but I said, 'if anything goes to my parents', I mean I am the oldest and that gives a bad name to your sisters that come after you. No one will even bother with them. 'Oh she used to go with guys'. That's it! No one will even bother to ask for their hand. (F2G1)

[49] Life history's of respondents and their kin revealed that great-grandmothers, grandmothers, mothers, aunts, and female cousins and neighbors of first generation respondents all married between the ages of 12-15. Yet among first generation respondents - who were teenagers during the 1960's experiencing their own courtship years - there were no marriages before the age of 17. In fact, to the researcher's surprise, among one Lebanese extended family, marriage occurred quite late (by Middle Eastern standards) for many of the female members. Three sisters did not marry until they were in their late 20's.

> Everyone was dating secretively. You had your choice of who you wanted to marry, but dating itself was secretive. (F4G1)

Young adults dating in the Middle East during the 1960's and 1970's were caught in the midst of these transitional changes. Although significant changes were occurring in courtship and marital institutions in the Middle East at this time, they remained insufficient, resulting in an underground movement, that is, secret dating and eloping. Some parents were more liberal in that behavioral and dress codes were now less restrictive for daughters.

Some of the young adults who were in their courtship years at this time in the Middle East, and who immigrated to Canada during the 1960's and 1970's, have become the older respondents of this study. Ironically, some of these present-day parents are being extremely restrictive with their own children. Chapters three and four investigates this traditional phenomena within a Canadian context.

CHAPTER THREE

CONTEMPORARY CONTEXT: THE COURTSHIP CRISIS

In this chapter it will be demonstrated that an ideological clash occurs which is localized mainly between fathers and daughters. This clash concerns behavioral norms, especially with regard to courtship. Data will be presented concerning the origin and nature of this conflict which takes place within Christian Arab Canadian families.

The first part of this chapter will show how an ethnographic analysis (consisting of a domain, taxonomic, componential and thematic analysis) of the data confirmed the continuing existence of a traditional Middle Eastern female "archetype" in the Canadian context. Furthermore it localizes the archetype in the minds of the immigrant fathers. This chapter will report on the influences of this archetype on the lives of Arab Canadian children and their parents. It introduces the concept of the "box", a behavioral code, a division into competing and opposing camps among women within the community, the courtship crisis and its various manifestations, female and male voices of individual experiences, and the influence and context of the Arab community. Before progressing to the descriptive aspect of this study, the procedure for data analysis will be presented.

DATA ANALYSIS

Data collection and data analysis was an ongoing simultaneous process with analysis continuing after data collection was completed. Unstructured interviews were conducted, both tape recorded and by note-taking. Taped interviews were transcribed verbatim, which contributed to revealing and understanding the nuances occurring, for example, tone of voice, hesitations in answering, silences, loudness and softness of voice, and to contextualize spoken Arabic terms. Notes were taken during non-recorded interviews, or immediately thereafter.

Spradley defines an ethnographic analysis as a "search for the parts of a culture, the relationships among the parts, and their relationships to the whole" (1980:116). Hence, an ethnographic analysis was conducted to determine if traditional Middle Eastern cultural patterns of courtship, marriage and sexual knowledge transmission, were both existing and/or operative in a Canadian context.

The procedure followed was based on Spradley's (1979; 1980) ethnographic methodology. Several areas within the context of courtship, marriage and sexual knowledge transmission were investigated to discover cultural meanings. Although the study conducted was larger than the aspect being presented in this thesis, data analysis for this thesis focuses on the two following areas:

A) individual experiences of family members leading up to, during, and after the 'courtship crisis', to determine:

1) what is the 'courtship crisis', and its range of expression
2) the underlying cause(s) of the crisis
3) how resolution is or is not achieved

B) methods of sexual knowledge transmission, i.e.,

1) what is being transmitted
2) who is transmitting sexual knowledge
3) how is this knowledge being transmitted

Who and *how* were examined with respect to both the school and non-school based milieus, and also with respect to whether the data was transmitted formally or informally. Then the question of how these kinds of information influenced the courtship crisis was examined. It was hypothesized that the crisis unfolds due to a disparity of information among participants. The first set of aspects (A) are addressed in chapters three and four; the second set of aspects (B) are addressed in chapter five.

Analysis

Both domain and taxonomic analysis were conducted on the data simultaneously.

A ***domain*** analysis was conducted to determine 'categories of meaning' in the context of courtship, marriage and sexual knowledge transmission among respondents. Various cultural domains unfolded, for example, shame and 'the box'. These were then subdivided, inclusive terms appropriately categorized, then analyzed to determine how these terms related to one another. For example, a number of terms, *'eyb*, *khuzy*, and *'aar*, referred to acts of shame. Or within the domain of 'the box', subcategories and inclusive terms were

discovered such as, what 'the box' consists of; psychological effects experienced; means and ways utilized for maneuvering within the box, et cetera. Their specific cultural meanings were ascertained.

A ***taxonomic*** analysis was conducted to discover the internal structure of these domains. This enabled the researcher to determine relationships among terms and subsets of terms within each domain. In relation to the first above-mentioned example, the terms *'eyb*, *khuzy* and *'aar* are under the subcategory of 'kinds of shame'. This enabled the researcher to see how respondents used each term in a number of different settings. In the second above-mentioned domain, examples of taxonomic analysis performed are: 'what are the steps girls take to get out of the 'box', and 'what are the steps taken by parents to tighten the 'box''. Both above-mentioned analyses were verified with respondents and further checked through participant observation.

Next a ***componential*** analysis was done to discover the differences among symbols within a domain. Each attribute is related to a term by a semantic relationship. For example, being a non-virgin, being pregnant and unmarried, being unmarried and delivering a baby, are examples of the different kinds of shameful acts within the category of *'aar*. Whereas, *'eyb* is bad, not good, a misdemeanor. Although both words refer to acts of shame; *'eyb* is misconduct in a general sense, whereas *'aar* is specifically sexual misconduct. Similarities, differences, and anomalies were noted, and a regrouping of categories was conducted. This led to further emerging cultural categories and insights. Information was verified through participant observation and through confirming with key informants.

A more **in-depth** analysis was conducted of the relationships existing *within* and *between* each category. For example, discovering the definitions of; causes of; consequences of; and dissolving of shame - for both males and females, of various age groupings, within both a past and present setting; and within both a Middle Eastern and Canadian context, followed by a cross-examination of the relationship between shame and 'the box', shame and transmitting sex information, shame and dating, et cetera. This was then noted and analyzed for similarities, differences, and anomalies. These findings were then recycled back to respondents for verification and corrections.

The same four step analysis (domain, taxonomic, componential and in-depth) was also conducted on sexual knowledge transmission. The aim here was to discover *what* was being transmitted; *who* was transmitting; and *how* the information was being transmitted. It was discovered that two arenas of interaction were emerging: school and non-school based. Within these two environments, a further subdivision of formal and informal transmission of

information exists. Mode of transmission is determined by the degree of planning and intent that goes into the transmission. Formal transmission of sexual knowledge refers to a structured instructional process implying a degree of planning or intent and organization, for example as found in schools, in families, or in religious institutions. Informal knowledge transmission refers to an unstructured transmission of sexual knowledge, for example as transmitted through peers, or in casual conversations.

Finially, a ***thematic*** analysis (Spradley 1980:87-88) revealed that there were certain cultural themes which cross-cut domains and taxonomic categories. This revealed that fear of *shame* cross-cut many cultural domains. Concern about shame was a central reference point in the 'courtship crisis'; in concern over one's status within the Arab community; in concern over the behavior of one's children; in socializing; in mate-selection; in dating, and in numerous other aspects of social life. Further the thematic analysis revealed that much of what was shameful was linked to the Middle Eastern female archetypes of Madonna-Whore.

CONTEMPORARY CONTEXT

Abu-Laban's reporting on the results of the Toronto-Montreal Survey conducted in 1974 of Muslim and Christian Arab Canadians, provided a comparative overview of the contrast between traditional Arab and current Canadian mate-selection:

> The North American climate emphasizes freedom of choice and freedom of search in mate-selection, while Arab tradition emphasizes parental control, guidance and restrictions on the pre-marital quest. (Abu-Laban, S. 1979:137)

In a Middle Eastern context, mothers are under considerable stress to monitor their daughters constantly and shield them from any external influence which may taint their reputation which might jeopardize their marital chances. The mother is accountable to her husband, should anything occur to taint their daughter's reputation. This may transpire through misbehavior on the girl's part, through outside intervention (seduction or rape), or even through slander directed at the girl, however unfounded.

In the Canadian context, mothers tend to be more supportive of their daughter's adaptation of Canadian norms and dating practices than their

husbands, who perceive any taint on a daughter's reputation in terms of damage it may do to the family's standing within the community. Thus mothers may be more concerned for their daughters' happiness whereas the father's attention is divided between his daughters' future and the family's reputation. The fact that these interests (the daughter's future and the family's reputation) seem at times to be at odds may be the source of great anguish for fathers.

As a result, fathers and daughters become engaged in a dynamic interplay of clashing wills. The fathers uphold the Middle Eastern ideology of honor (*'ird*) and shame which is interwoven with the Middle Eastern conceptualization of the female, and impose this upon their daughters. The daughters partly caught up in the Canadian context, more or less reject this imposition. This clash of belief systems escalates during adolescence in a ***'courtship crisis'*** which erupts over dating and eventual marriage choices of the daughter.

The basis of this discussion is an examination of the context of this ***'courtship crisis'***; the participants in this conflict; case examples and effects of the conflict. The discussion will then investigate the sources and possible resolutions to this conflict.

Initially this research project focused on Christian Arab Canadian women's experiences in the context of courtship, marriage and sexuality, thus they were the first people interviewed. Awareness emerged that traditional and non-traditional institutions of courtship constitute a major source of conflict within Christian Arab Canadian families. Although the central conflict centers among key actors of daughters and fathers, it became increasingly clear that all family members were deeply affected by the dynamics which were occurring in this area. Thus the decision was made to obtain the voices of mothers, daughters, fathers and sons, to gain a more holistic perspective and understanding of what was occurring, and to document the perspective and experiences of each person involved in the crisis.

Since it is in the relationships of fathers and their daughters that this conflict escalates into crisis situations, this study focuses on how the crisis arises when daughters begin dating behavior following Canadian cultural norms and their fathers discover this. The role of ideological contradictions between parent and child was explored. Because the whole family was affected by the conflict, a variety of family members were interviewed. Thus the nature of the clashing ideologies was made more clear. Each individual either adhered to what might be termed a *traditional* behavioral code or to a *modern* one. All individuals knew the basic differences between these two behavioral codes.

For the purposes of this thesis, families in which the father has not modified his traditional ideology are referred to as *traditional* families. Where the father's ideology has been modified their households are referred to as *modern*. Therefore *modern* refers to a family where the father responded to the 'courtship crisis' with eventual acceptance that open dating was not inconsistent with honorable behavior.

Regardless of the variety of views other family members may have held, the ideological tone of the household was set by the father. Behavior in a household headed by a father adhering to tradition will be expected to be traditional. It should be noted that, with regard to dating behavior, all fathers initially adhered to the traditional ideological position.

Behavior of the daughters depended upon the type of paternal response they met with. Mothers in *traditional* families had a marginal role, whereas mothers in *modern* households took a more active role as mediator between father and child(ren). Other family members, especially brothers, varied in their input depending on whether they adhered to *modern* or *traditional* views of female behavior. Family composition and birth order also had a marked effect on how the father-daughter conflict was resolved.

THE EARLY YEARS

All *traditional* women in the project reported growing up in a strict behavioral environment which they called "the box" or the "doghouse". The "box" is an intangible, yet very real defined space – arbitrarily determined within each family – of set limitations beyond which daughters cannot go. The "box" consists of a code of behaviors designed to ensure an Arab Canadian girl has, maintains, and is publicly perceived to have an untainted reputation, i.e., no association whatsoever with any aspects of sexuality. The "box" consists of restrictions for language usage, (no swearing, no sexual terms), a dress code; no social contact with males; not being seen in public without a family member present, et cetera. In other words, the "box" is the traditional modesty code as operating in the Middle Eastern regions and some parts of Africa. This term, "the box", was used only among female members of *traditional* families, even in front of men in their households when complaining about restrictions they feel. Male informants are therefore aware of the female usage of this term. The term "the box" was not used among "modern females" although various aspects of "the box" were manifest within *modern* households. It is not possible to speculate how widespread the term is throughout North America but it is used throughout Alberta according to

information collected in this study. It is not known whether this term is also used in the traditional Muslim families.

Within Christian Arab Canadian families, the "box" begins with the birth of a girl child.[1] The role of the female as depicted by the Middle Eastern ideology of the feminine, clearly views female children in a weaker standing than those of male children, as this analogy provided by one first generation Palestinian Canadian respondent reveals:

> The tree is life. The stem of the tree is the parents and from those parents come all the branches. The branches are the children. Any branch that comes slowly, or a new branch, is the one that needs your attention and your protection to go straight. Daughters are the 'delicate' branches because if someone should sit on that branch, or if someone should brush next to it, it might break. So that is the branch that you protect, it is the weaker branch. So you protect it to make it stronger. The comparison between weak branches and daughters are because they are delicate and feminine and need protection. (F2G1)

Predetermined restrictions for daughters behavior will begin to manifest themselves when she is still quite young. Girls with brothers reported that they realized early in life that boys had certain privileges which girls did not: they were allowed to swear; they had freedom of movement outside the home; freedom to have friends and engage in activities outside the home; and freedom from household chores. One second generation women referring to her brother, whose privileges in speech to their father exceeds hers, states:

> He's really given a lot of leeway and I mean I never raised my voice to my father, you know **NEVER!** Neither have my sisters. And he[2] said some pretty nasty things to us and we're kind of 'um huh, um huh'. You know, we'll argue with him, but like I would never say 'fuck you' no matter how much I felt like it. My brother will go, 'shit man go to hell!' and then he'll get up and walk away. My father will sit there sort of fuming, but he won't say anything. (F5G2)

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[1] One could even say it begins before birth.

[2] The reference here is to the father.

Girls without brothers tend to report becoming aware of being in a "box" when they begin to compare themselves with Canadian peers in the school system.

(Christian) Arab Canadian girls growing up in Edmonton desired to conform to the behavior of their peers within the public school system. The "box" was incompatible with this.

> I wasn't allowed to sit on the front step like Canadians do, because if any Arab person drove by and saw me, it was shame. We weren't allowed to go to birthday parties. I was never allowed to take a bus. Anywhere I went, my mother, father or brothers had to come with us. (F3G2)

> I wanted my girlfriends to understand I can't do the things they could do and they never did. As a result, they did not want to be my friend. It's heart wrenching. You suffer so much and at the same time you are looked down upon. (F6G2)

During childhood the "box" consists of an expected feminine physical appearance and a dress code designed to conform to the Arabic ideal. A Christian Arab Canadian girl who follows the rules is viewed and spoken of with great praise by her parents and the Arab community.

> I have no independence, no guts, I am scared to do anything. You are in a box and you have to live by the rules and there is no way around them. Some people take the initiative and are totally banned. The girls that sit back as I did, are praised, totally praised. You live in a box and wait until it is your time to be married and move from their father's hand to their husband's hands. These girls are praised beyond belief, but looked down by Canadians of course. (F7G2)

> Expectations are part of the 'box', tons and tons of them. They[3] use guilt and shame if you don't. There are two main reasons they keep you in the box. One, you will bring shame to the family. Two, they fear something will happen to their daughters, because if the daughter is raped, then there is BIG trouble, because then they think nobody will marry her. No one will accept her. These are their biggest fears. I have my own kids now, I see half of my dad's point, the fear half. It's hard to let your child

[3] The reference here is to the parents.

> go to a birthday party. They treat the three year old protectively because they think they do not know anything and they do not bother to teach them anything. This is how they treat girls until she is 18 years old. They just keep them away from exposure to everything. (F3G2)

Christian Arab Canadian girls who step outside the "box" incite adversary responses from their fathers, as these women report referring to when they were younger.

> I used to cut my hair very short and I liked to wear baggy clothes. I remember getting into some pretty wicked fights with my father over it. He would say, 'why can't you be like other girls. Look at your girlfriend Susan, why can't you be like her'. Susan had long hair and wore frilly blouses. I did initially when I was younger, and that's why I got no friction. As I grew older, I wanted to be a bit different so I cut my hair and wore baggy clothes. He just could not stand it! Everyday we argued about it, everyday I was sent to my room in tears. (F1G2)

> 'I will kill you!'. 'I will kill you!'. I grew up with 'I will kill you!' my whole life. It was my dad's favorite all through my teen years. After awhile you become numb to it. 'Ya, you'll kill me'. He was disciplined in the 'what I say, goes'. They think they can impose that on us here, they can't. So in order to maintain control and respect, they use fear. (F5G2)

One Christian Palestinian Canadian woman interviewed stated that when she was 13 she told herself, "when I'm not in the box I'm going to do what I want. What I am going to do is worth the punishment". In fact, this particular girl did get out of the "box", and when she married a non-Arab Canadian, her mother said, "well Nada is finally out of the doghouse". Another second generation girl reports:

> I screamed at my father once when I was young. 'You do not love my mom, you treat her like a slave'. He slapped me across the face. He was upsetting me because I couldn't go skating with my class. He said, 'Look at your mom, she doesn't go skating, she's happy. You learn to cook'. I said, 'So I will grow up and marry someone just like you'. (F3G2)

These girls are obviously beginning to experience some alienation from their families when they try to conform to their Canadian friends; some resolve this by lying, some restrict their activities. But at this point in their lives they begin to feel the restriction of the "box".

The "box" acquires more definition for a girl when she begins to display physical characteristics of 'growing up': becoming prettier, breasts developing, and menstruation. The process begins with increasingly vigilant behavior on the part of the fathers to keep their daughters in the box.

> If my girlfriend and I go to a movie, my dad writes the car mileage down before we leave and when I return. I must phone when I get to the theater and when the movie is finished. He times how long it takes me by a given route to return. This is to make sure I don't make any detours. (F7G2)

Parents initially hold the belief that if their children "hang out" with non-Arab Canadian young adults they will be influenced negatively and be drawn away from traditional values and standards of acceptable behavior. As a result, parents either restrict who their children may socialize with, in particular daughters, or children are not allowed to socialize outside of extended family members. This belief by parents asserts itself more as children become teenagers and wish to conform to peer activities. The following statement was typically heard from second generation respondents[4] as a reason cited by parents for why children, in particular females, were continually denied access to activities and involvement with non-Arab Canadians.

> 'I don't want you to end up dead in a ditch from wearing something like that'. They think Canadians or whoever they are hanging around with are going to influence them to the point that they are going to do drugs, overdose and like be dead in a ditch. (F8G2)

At this stage in the girl's life the father's fear of potential shame which may befall the family due to her misconduct, increases.

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[4] These social restrictions on who one may 'hang out with' extended to sons as well, as one 'modern' second generation son reports: "Don't hang out with anybody, go to school and come home. Don't do this, don't do that'. They do not want you to pick up any bad Canadian habits like slang, or they throw swears into everything, or they may pick up smoking".

> My father says 'you shouldn't be staying out so late' or, 'you shouldn't be dressing that way' and I say, 'why?' He says, because 'people will talk, what will your uncles think'. (F1G2)

Despite these parental beliefs and restrictions, extended socializing with non-Arab Canadians does occur among the second generation as the following excerpts reveal.

> Parents are really oblivious to who their kids hang around with because they think, 'ok, my kids are not going to the bar, my kids are not doing drugs, my kids are not having sex, so obviously they cannot meet too many people'. But that's not true. (F9G2)

> They don't realize we hang around with non-Arab people at school. They think for example, 'the Blacks - oh look! they are killing each other, the Whites - oh they're worthless! look at whatever'. They have the same attitude that anyone around us is going to influence us to do bad. And 'oh God is going to take pity on you and he's going to strike you with thunder' or something like that because you are not hanging around with your 'kind' and you're fooling around, you're being a little slut', you know. (F8G2)

This is heightened when their high school peers begin to date. Christian Arab Canadian girls also want to date like their friends. Dating (for females) however, is seen by (Christian) Arab Canadian families as a highly structured part of courtship behavior and is taken far more seriously than in many Canadian families. From the point of view of traditional Arab families, these girls are entering the critical period when they become eligible for marriage.

For traditional parents of this new generation growing up in Canada, these early teenage years are a time when great care must be taken so that the first man in their daughter's life becomes her husband and family dishonor is avoided. It is not as it is for many Canadian families, a time when young people experiment with relationships and learn to interact with the opposite sex. For parents there is a structured process a female follows in courtship.

This traditional process, as expressed in the Christian Arab Canadian community, involves a daughter meeting a Christian Arab or Christian Arab Canadian young man; having contact with one another usually amidst the presence of others (a carry over from the chaperone institution); becoming

engaged[5] - thereby being able to go out together alone as a couple i.e., dating; announcing a wedding date; and the female remaining a virgin until the wedding night. The following excerpts reveal parental expectations of this traditional process to be followed.

> The most honorable thing for an Arab man, if he has daughters, is that they all married and come out as pure and virgin from his home into their husband's home. So this way it's like he's raising his head up, nothing can embarrass him. 'My daughter honored me till the last minute and she walked out of my house straight to her husband's'. (F2G1)

> My three daughters they know their dad wouldn't accept them to go out with guys so they avoid that until they find the right one, get to know him, go out, get engaged, get married. We always like the relationship to lead to marriage or respectful relationship. (F4G1)

> It's essential to have the girl married because children are required to carry on the family name. If a girl waits until she is 30 to marry, she diminishes her chances to have children, there goes the family name. The man's parents pressure him, 'don't look at a women who is 30, she will not have children and her future will stop there. The point here is the children, and the other point is her age. If she is too old she will not have children. If she is too old, she will not marry. The reason a man who is 60 or 70 marries a young woman is for the children, for his family name. (M3G1)

In addition, all parents in the study held the belief that marriage for daughters was inevitable, and placed a high value and significance on daughters achieving this. Among *traditional* families, there is parental expectation for early marriage (by Canadian standards) of daughters. Upon completion of high school or the acquisition of a university degree, marriage is then desired, encouraged and sometimes forced on daughters by *traditional* parents. The motivating factors behind this are fourfold: the most valued roles[6] for females are still wife and mother; higher education for

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[5] Becoming engaged is still viewed as an extremely important part of the courtship process desired by parents, and in some cases, required. It serves a twofold purpose: first, it is a public announcement to the community of the formal status change which has occurred for one's daughter; secondly, it is a protective mechanism to assist in preventing *fadiha* in the community about one's daughter's behavior.

[6] In some cases marriage and motherhood are still viewed as the only roles for females. This attitude is found among both males and females within *traditional* families.

females is not valued,[7] nor desired;[8] to avoid any possibility of tainted *'ird* occurring through the daughter's misconduct; and the worry and concern of "who will take care of the daughter?" when the parents become older and eventually die. It is still believed that a female is incapable of 'taking care of herself', irrespective of how well educated or financially secure she may be. The last concern is still expressed even by parents among *modern* households as one second generation *modern* women reports.

> Like you've 'made it' when you are married. To them[9] I'm a little over the hill. I'm 25 and unmarried and back home[10] they are screaming **'what's wrong!'** and I see nothing wrong with it, you know being raised here. It's just fine with me. But my father, I can sense, is sort of hoping something happens soon because it would be easier on him. He would prefer to see me married. To him 'that's' taken care of. There's someone to take care of her. (F8G2)

THE FEMININE SPLIT

Within the Christian Arab community, daughters responses to these traditional expectations tended to fall into one of two groups: either there was an adherence to, or a rejection of, the imposed tradition. The former group (hereafter referred to as the *traditional* girls) was further subdivided into three subgroups based upon the daughter's motives for adherence to her fathers demands.

The first subgroup of *traditional* girls represents daughters who adhere to their father's traditional expectations out of the belief that they would be

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[7] Among *modern* families, higher education of daughters is valued and encouraged and in fact, brings great honor to the family.

[8] In general, among *traditional* families, higher education is viewed as "not necessary" for females, and is considered a threat to both male authority within the home and the traditional role structure for females. The resistance to this is more than just an opposition to the breakdown of traditional female roles, it is an opposition to the breakdown of the traditional Middle Eastern female "Madonna" archetype.

[9] The reference here is to the parents.

[10] The reference here is to the 'old country'.

rewarded with the title of *sit el bate* (Lady of the House) upon marriage. This title represents a woman who has a husband, children, and is in control of her own household. This may be pursued as a pleasurable goal when compared to the girl's situation in her father's house. Hence their desire, willingness to accept, and faith in an arranged or early marriage shortly after completion of high school.

> My cousin wanted to marry as soon as possible, as soon as she finished high school. She was the 'first one'[11] and she took the first suitor who knocked at the door just so she could be married. Now she regrets it. (F2G2)

One woman who went through the traditional courtship process and had an arranged marriage reports her views on arranged marriages:

> I don't mind arranged marriages. I don't like the idea you have to be engaged to date. I like the Canadian engagement, it is so romantic. Arranged marriages to me means if your parents like the guy, it means they know more than you do and what is good for you. They would not do anything to harm their kids. So if they picked him it means they want him, he's good and 99.9% of arranged marriages don't end in divorce. (F3G2)

The above however, was an exceptional view, and stated in front of her husband. Most girls do not feel this way. In fact, this woman reported in subsequent interviews, that she wanted to back out of the engagement, but because of the monetary expenditure by her parent's on her behalf, and the hurt and shame it would have caused them, she went through with the marriage. Thus these girls believed once they were married and out of their father's house they would be free of the "box".[12]

This was an illusion. Most of these girls ended up in marriages with husbands who were perpetuating the traditional expectations just as vehemently as their father's had. Many of these girls regret this act of compliance and express envy of the girls who made it out of the "box". One second generation *traditional* woman referring to her sister who made it out of the "box" reports:

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[11] The reference here is to the girl's birth order in her family. She was the first born daughter.

[12] Al-Khayyat (1990) reports girls in her study also follow the same belief and action as a means of coping with imposed tradition, "one gets married to get away from the parental home". (42)

> I put my sister on a pedestal. She's more educated than me, she's smarter than me, she's four years younger than me, but look at where she's at. She's gained in friends and marriage. I did not do that and here I sit and live a life of misery because I sit and worry about what people are going to say. I did what was expected of me and I am miserable for it. (F6G2)

The second subgroup of *traditional* daughters who adhere to traditional courtship rules reported feeling they had no means, given their situation, in which to oppose their father's courtship and marriage expectations and demands. These girls, although opposed to the traditional courtship and marital path, resigned themselves to the traditional roles imposed on females as their fate. Upon completion of high school, many of these girls marry. They may be sent back to the old country by their fathers before they have the opportunity to become interested in non-Arab Canadian men; alternatively the father either brings a chosen suitor from the old country, or finds one from within the Christian Arab Canadian community for his daughter. Whether the Arab man is from the old country or the local Christian Arab Canadian community, some of these young women feel they have no choice or voice, and that an arranged or early marriage is their only fate. These girls in the first two subgroups are the sacrificial lambs of the Middle Eastern courtship system. They also tended to be either first born or only daughters in *traditional* families.[13]

The third subgroup of *traditional* daughters are also opposed to following the traditionally imposed courtship and marriage path for females. Their adherence to traditional courtship and marriage expectations are viewed as a survival technique of 'playing the game' to get out of the parental home. They believe that once they are out of their father's house, and hence control, "it is easier to confront a husband than it is to confront a father". Thus, they will accept an arranged or early marriage with the intention of divorcing. Once married, the parents can no longer control them. Once divorced the husband can no longer control them. If the girl is very traditional, she will not remarry again, as a prevailing traditional belief within the Arab community is "no Arab man will marry her", and she will not consider marrying a non-Arab Canadian man. She will raise her children and "live for them". If she is less traditional she may marry again, and often she will marry a non-Arab.

These docile girls however, like their sisters, are frequently subjected to increased restrictions, and in many cases, an attempt is made to arrange a

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[13] It was not surprising to find that once younger sisters saw that older sisters who followed traditional expectations, went from one box to another, that the choice to rebel against the traditional courtship process was pursued - so as not to experience the same fate themselves.

marriage for them before they have any further chance to defile family honor. In the sample there were several instances where young women among the extended families were sent back to the old country to be married there by arrangement, against their wishes. In some cases, the prospective spouse of the girl is sent for:

> They bring someone from the old country or try to find someone here. There is no criteria in how the guy is chosen. There are no standards followed. 'Oh I have this nephew of mine, he's gorgeous'! He could be a fat slob who rolled down the stairs with two canes, but 'Oh, he's the pick of the litter'! This is how they find them. Word of mouth only, and whose available, and whose having trouble. Like, this guy could be the ugliest thing in the entire world. They will make him sound like Hercules and when he meets her, he is sitting there in his size 85 jeans, flowers in hand, and the girl has to sit there and smile and nod'. (F9G2)

One *traditional* second generation girl referring to her father who has decided she must marry a suitor from the old country states:

> My dad said he will bring a guy over here and 'you will date. That's the way it's going to be. He's the only one I want you to see, and if he wants to take you back to Israel, I will let him take you'. I can't say anything to my father when he says this, he would beat me if I did. (F7G2)

Another respondent referring to a suitor whom her father wants to bring over for her to marry, states:

> 'What if the guy's a loser?' He's not asking me to marry him, he's asking my father. 'Well dad, you marry this guy. I don't want to be stuck in that life. The reason you came to Canada was to get a better life, so why are you sticking me with this? Why! If your trying to get a better life for me then leave these smug assholes where they are. Let them go find some other... (F10G2)

Other girls attempt to get out of the box before their father imposes these traditional measures on her, as one second generation *traditional* woman reveals:

> My cousin's dad wanted her married off by the time she was 20 because he said, she will be a prune. She graduates in half a year and then she is leaving. She just keeps telling herself 'half a year, half a year to go, then I am free'. (F6G2)

The second group of daughter's responses to parental traditional ideology and behavioral codes consisted of daughters who had no desire to conform to the imposed traditional expectations on them (hereafter referred to as the *modern* girls). Their rejection of these traditional expectations and codes of behavior was expressed either overtly or covertly, or through a combination of both kinds of methods and techniques. Some girls openly rebelled and confronted their fathers and the traditional Middle Eastern belief systems concerning the nature of the female, female sexuality, honor and shame and patriarchal authority. Other girls rebelled covertly, directing activities from behind the scenes, dating secretly and making plans to get out of the "box".

Among *modern* families there are no arranged marriages for the second generation. In fact, all second generation unmarried *modern* females (and males) stated that an arranged marriage would be a devastating experience to them. One second generation Palestinian woman relating what she said to her parents on the topic of arranged marriage states:

> If you were the type of parents who had committed me to someone without me knowing them, without me loving them, I might as well slash my wrists and die. To me, it's like death if I cannot marry someone I love. I might as well die. Anything that they could do to me could not be worse than that. (F1G2)

Some women not only lack faith in arranged marriages, they lack faith in any marriage:

> I would love to have a marriage that lasts thirty years. But being realistic, I don't think I can because of the kind of person I am and because of the society we live in. It's honestly kind of impossible. I know I am going to have trouble with my marriage. I am very independent. I am dedicated to my educational pursuits and I am a perfectionist. I would not give a man the attention he would want. (F9G2)

Yet parental pressure to marry is still present even for *modern* unmarried women, as the following excerpt reveals:

> My dad wants me to marry, he is always dropping hints 'I don't want to tell you what to do, but don't you think it's getting a little late in the game'. No matter how educated the girl is, they still just want you married. (F8G2)

In addition to high level resistance to arranged, early, or any marriage, numerous young women from *modern* families also expressed an aversion to dating an Arab (Canadian), let alone marrying one.[14]

In general these two different groups of responses by daughters to fathers, and hence by extension, continued tradition, have developed into rivals of one another. In general, *traditional* girls tend to put *modern* girls 'down', slandering them for the freedoms they have gained in decision-making, behavior and lifestyle. Yet many of these *traditional* girls confessed to envying the *modern* girl who "had enough guts" to challenge tradition and make it out of the "box". In some cases, *modern* girls will assist *traditional* girls who follow traditional rules, but usually only those who are attempting themselves to get out of the "box" (subgroup three). *Modern* girls generally reported feeling "sorry" and "angry" for girls in subgroup two. Yet as a result of the gap in lifestyles between the two groups of girls, little or no contact between them existed. Further, *modern* girls reported feeling "disgust", "contempt" and antagonism towards girls who were in subgroup one, as they believed these *traditional* girls perpetuated the traditional system which they were trying to break. As a result, within the (Christian) Arab Canadian community, *modern girls*, and *traditional* girls who are attempting to break out of the "box", are generally found to be rivals of girls pursuing the goal of *sit el bate*.

Needless to say, there is a sharp contrast in the belief systems held among these two groups of girls. Each of the two groups hold opposing belief systems with regard to the nature of a female and female roles. One *modern* second generation female commenting upon the difference between these "opposing camps", mentions that:

> It's the *traditional* families here, even the girls themselves, who still see a girl past the age of 18 as a prune. 'oh my God I'm not married! I better hurry up'. Then the other half of us think 27, 28 is a prune. (F11G2)

Another *modern* second generation Christian Arab Canadian woman referring to the antagonism existing between these two groups of Christian

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[14] See chapter four, section: Influence of the Female Archetype Madonna-Whore for further elaboration of this view.

Arab Canadian women, relates a typical experience encountered at social gatherings:

> See there's two sides to everything. It's the influence of the mothers[15] to the girls.[16] If the mothers are 'yak, yak', yak, and remember what I told you about the weddings, **'oh my God look at her, she's wearing lace, SLUT!'** Then the other half would do the same thing. They would be just like their mothers. It would be **'Oh my God, I can't believe, what a slut! I'd never get pregnant myself'**. But once they do - **BANG!** - everything changes, everything changes. It takes them for the whirlwind of their life because she always thinks 'it can never happen to me'.
>
> They sneak around and date too. They have their own double standards. Because they do it themselves too. That's where they get into trouble, whereas we are smart about it. So they will date Arab men, because no Canadian would tolerate them. So she gets pregnant and right away - **Marriage! Bang! Boom!** and they don't even talk about pregnancy, they just 'oh what a coincidence, she's pregnant'. A lot of times they'll catch it in the second month, and say something, **Bang! married right there.** (F9G2)

As a result of this gap between *traditional* and *modern* (Christian) Arab Canadian women within the community, very little contact is maintained between the two. The following are typical statements heard by *modern* second generation Christian Arab Canadian woman referring to why they want nothing to do with the Arab Canadian community in general, and *traditional* (Christian) Arab Canadian women in particular:

> They tend to gossip a lot, involve themselves in things that are none of their business. That bothers me a lot. I don't want to be part of a community that's going to point fingers at me every time I go out with my boyfriend to the New Year's Eve party. Or this spring, 'she's not engaged and they're showing up in public, how could they'. Like I get tired of it. They're so petty and they love dirty laundry, even though they all have their share of it. (F1G2)

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[15] The reference here is to *traditional* mothers.

[16] The reference here is to *traditional* daughters.

> Frankly, we don't care what 'our sphere'[17] does and everybody knows that. We do our own thing, either you talk to us or you don't. It's your loss, it's not ours. Trust us, you know, it's not our loss. But with them[18] they're so based on, like I said, 'influence', - 'what everybody says'. (F5G2)

Obviously some *traditional* girls follow the expected conventional path for a female and hence, do not participate in the typical Canadian socialization process that most young adult Canadians experience. As a result these girls have no frame of reference with which to relate to peers who are discussing typical teenage activities (at, or after school), in particular dating. These girls become outcast by their peers, if not physically, then psychologically.

> My girlfriend Rula, she hasn't dated at all. She's been asking me all kinds of questions. Like, what is it like to kiss a guy and what is it like to go on a date? She's really depressed because she knows she's missing out on a lot of things. And she knows that when she's at school with her friends and they sit there talking about the things they did at the bar, and this guy and that guy, she can't really get involved because she doesn't even know how it feels to kiss somebody, because she never has. (F12G2)

> If you hear your friends talking about their dating the night before, you can only pretend because you are not allowed to date. You are an outcast. So we make up things secretly. (F7G2)

Thus the girls within these two groups have very different life experiences.

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[17] This is an emic (internal or subjective) term used by respondents to refer to the 'Arab community' in general. More specifically, it refers to a particular group of people within the community which the family knows and may or may not associate with.

[18] The reference here is to *traditional* girls.

THE SHROUDED SIDE OF LIFE

As a result of their responses to their father's imposition of traditional culture, the teenage years then are a period of increasing trauma for (Christian) Arab Canadian girls. If they adhere to traditional expectations they are isolated from peers. If they rebel, and begin to date, they experience conflict with their fathers. It is hardly surprising then that many (Christian) Arab Canadian females date secretly. The following excerpts convey the extent to which this is happening.

> We would wait until her father fell asleep and we could hear him snoring. Then we would sneak out the window. We would all meet at the bar. There were lots of Arabs there, Christians and Muslims. Muslims are not allowed to drink you know, but I see a lot of them in the bar behind their father's back. Some of my Muslim girlfriends say, 'ok, we are going to a movie'. Their parents ask, 'are you going with guys?' 'No, it's just me and my girlfriends'. But they are going with guys. So we all go to the bar, have our six or seven drinks, which they are not allowed to, but still do. (F9G2)

> There is lots of sneaking around. I mean they are kidding themselves if they think that their sons and daughters are not. And God help the kids if their father ever finds out, otherwise if someone came and tattled on the kid - because that will happen you know. Everyone likes to make your business, theirs. Other people if they saw for example, a very traditional father who has an attractive daughter, who he forbids to date until she is 20, and here she is 17 and she goes out off on a date one night at the mall. She tells her father she is going to a girlfriend's house. So a friend of the father's will see her sitting in the mall with her friends in the food court. Well, the father will know about it soon enough and she will be disciplined for it. (F1G2)

> I know for a fact that girls date behind their parents back, because my girls tell me that they spent the night with these girls in the bar - the girls who told their parents they were spending the night at their girlfriend's house. (F1G1)

Almost[19] inevitably these girls get caught 'sneaking around' and are disciplined. This may consist of verbal and/or physical abuse and 'grounding'. The "box" becomes smaller and there are many threats.

> If you are caught, they[20] yell at you. You just wait for one or two months then try again. They think it is *halis*.[21] For some girls it is *halis*, they don't try again. (F6G1)

Not all confrontations occurred within the family home. Some occurred in public places as the following passage illustrates:

> Her dad caught her with her boyfriend at the exhibition and beat the shit out of her. My husband had to stop him. The next day she ran away.[22] Later she became pregnant by her boyfriend. He[23] never talked to her or her baby for a long long time. (F4G1)

> Amal is not allowed to date so she sneaks out. She got herself arrested on purpose, it was the only way she could confront her parents in a public place and be safe by having the police there. When she got home she was beat(en). Her parents have slacked off a little, but when her dad starts to act up again by controlling her, she says, 'you know what happened last time. I can spend three years in jail. I will get an education there'. So her parents back off a little. (F2G2)

Exposure of such covert dating behavior leads to a major family crisis. Whether it is set off by exposure or initiated by overt rebellion on the part of the girl herself, the confrontation between father and daughter once set in motion, is so intense and dramatic that it represents a milestone in the process of ideological assimilation in Canada.

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[19] Some girls never get caught. Girls working or living outside the home have the opportunity to be alone with their boyfriends without the parents awareness, although common-law is an exception.

[20] The reference here is to parents.

[21] *Halis* means 'finished'.

[22] Kocturk (1992) reports Muslim Turkish immigrant girls in Sweden are also running away from home as a response to imposed traditional exectations by parents (112).

[23] The reference here is to the father.

The archetypes of male[24] and female gender roles are so central to Middle Eastern culture that they in a sense represent the last bastion of traditional cultural identity among Arab Canadians. These archetypes are not surrendered easily. But they <u>are</u> surrendered, transmuted and recast in a mold more suited to the contemporary reality of Canadian society. This process of ideological meltdown and reformation is the "courtship crisis".

THE COURTSHIP CRISIS

It is when the father discovers evidence that his daughter is actually seeing a young man, i.e., dating, that major confrontations begin.

> I had my first boyfriend during high school. One day when I was at work I get this phone call from him and his voice is shaking and he is just terrified. He says, 'I just phoned your place to ask for you and your dad answered the phone and told me **never to call your fucking place again, or he would kill me**'. This poor guy was in terror, and you know my father at the time he was **crazed**! This was so mortifying to me. (F1G1)

After the initial exposure of the daughters dating behavior, confrontations between father and daughter increase in frequency. Some fathers make return trips to the old country in search of husbands for their

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[24] Just as the Middle Eastern female Madonna-Whore archetypes are based in sexuality, the Middle Eastern Successful-Unsucessful male archetypes are economically based. A "successful" man as an ideal model, is seen as one who applies his energies to work that is economically productive, enhancing his chances of obtaining and maintaining economic wealth and status. Obtaining economic wealth and status assures that his family is 'well-taken care of', that there is a maintenance of authority within the family, and that he earns respect within the community, in particular among other men. Thus a steady energy expenditure applied towards achieving economic wealth and status is seen to earn power. The "unsuccessful" man is one who does not apply his energies in an economically productive way and who displays erratic discharges of energy. An unsuccessful man, and hence a dishonored man, is one who wastes his time, energy, and money on things which are risky thereupon putting the family name, and economic and social security in jeopardy. Examples of "unsuccessful" men are those who gamble and are drunkards. Male dishonor is based on economic behavior which is economically wasteful. To be considered successful, a man *must do whatever it takes* to remain economically solid. Male sexual misconduct is not associated with these "successful" and "unsucessful" archetypes because it is not viewed as affecting a man's ability to conduct economic affairs. Inherent in both Middle Eastern gender archetypes is a constraining set of behavioral codes.

daughters, with the intention of terminating any association or interest the daughter may have with non-Arab Canadian young men. The father and daughter in this first case had enormous conflict with respect to 'dating' resulting in a major confrontation.

The initial opposition by the father was to the threatening idea of the breakdown of endogamy (a marital preference directed within a relatively narrow circle, in this case, Arabs, specifically, Christian Arabs). The father undertook a trip to the old country, with an eye to finding potential spouses for his daughters. Unexpectedly, he encountered a major disappointment at the prospects and returned to Canada with the acceptance that his daughters would inevitably marry a non-Arab. This same daughter reported that he later said to her and her sisters:

> 'I'm not going to let you educate yourself and then marry someone who can't even speak English just for the sake of marrying an Arab. If you find someone here who is Arab, great! If you don't, that's fine. As long as he is a decent person'. (F1G2)

At this stage the father is reconciled with the breakdown of endogamy, but a major conflict still remains unresolved, the father's opposition to the Canadian 'dating-style'. A further aspect of the father's anguish is that fathers fear loss of respect in the Arab community. The idea that their daughters will shame them and show them up as being incapable of raising their children properly is of major concern. The father's fears and concerns here are ensuring the daughter's behavior does not bring tainted *'ird* upon the family name. As a result, confrontations between father and daughters continue. Further compounding the frustration and anger daughters were experiencing at this time was the fact that brothers were not subjected to the same restrictions or claims of shameful behavior. Moreover, some sons were encouraged to date non-Arab Canadian women, as one contemporary daughter reports:

> My brother can come in at 2:00 a.m., no problem. If I came in at 2:00 a.m. I would be knocked into next week. My brother can date Canadian women, no problem. But a girl dating a Canadian man - **major crisis!** (F12G2)

Eventually the levels of frustration, anger, and depression experienced by daughters and fathers increase until the situation mushrooms into a climactic point. In the above mentioned case, daughters banded together to

confront their father and the antiquated tradition that he was trying to impose upon them.

> At one point we were all just tired of it and we all got together in one group. I mean there is strength in numbers and this way we all had our opinions all together. And we just didn't have four bad critical points, we had one huge point. This was all about control. His control over us and that idea of shame and how we are always shaming him. This is what he thought and I think it's just basically the control. He yelled and yelled, 'I gave you everything'. I said, 'we didn't want everything, everytime we ask you to say I love you, you don't'. Like that's all we're asking.
>
> His point was that he was just doing it for our benefit. He said he didn't want to make the mistake his dad made. He's always dreaded that because his father was an asshole, I don't like him at all. **Ohh! He's beyond mean.** My father did not want himself to be like that, that's one of the reasons he stopped. We were all crying. He couldn't believe that since he was 13 he said he would never be like his father, and now he is 46 and he said 'I can't believe since I was 13 I said I was never going to treat my kids this way, and I have. I can't believe that I have and I never even realized it'.
>
> So he was shamed, and his guilt and shame came out as anger at us, because we pointed out what his failure was. Then after the big explosion, his biggest fear was that we would go and tell people in the Arab community and everyone's opinion of him would be lowered. (F5G2)

Gradually, through painful experiences on both the part of the fathers and the daughters, the father reaches a point of change, tolerance and understanding. Several years after this particular father's response on the telephone to his first daughter's boyfriend, the same father gave the following advice to all his daughters:

> I'll shoot you in the head before I let you date an Arab or marry one. I might as well kill you right now because that's the way your life is going to be, it's going to be nothing. You may as well be a slave, you might as well be in jail. I'd rather you steal an Eagle Talon from a Dodge Stealth and go to jail than marry an Arab man. (F9G2)

The case just discussed here illustrates one of the many paternal responses to the conflict over dating. Some fathers never soften their resistance. Others do so more reluctantly. But the locus of the conflict is always the same. As was illustrated in the case of the father discussed above, some individuals had moved from a predominantly traditional to a more contemporary ideology.

In a second case, one non-Arab Canadian woman who had been married to a Christian Arab Canadian man for thirty years, reported that the hardest time in their marriage was when their daughters began to date.[25]

> **It was the biggest fight!** My first daughter was not bad. One day my husband and daughter were in a mall and a classmate[26] of hers said 'hi' to her. He lectured her all the way home, 'Who is this guy? What is he doing talking to you?' This was when she was in high school. One night he followed her, the oldest daughter, and saw her with a guy. I warned her not to come home. He disowned her because she went against tradition. So she moved out. He wanted nothing to do with her. When she left he never mentioned her.
>
> My second daughter was defiant of both parents. When the second daughter began to date, she would skip school and go see her boyfriend out of town. She would phone me to tell her dad that she is staying at her girlfriend's for the weekend. But it got to me. I covered for her until I felt like I was in prison. I could not go out of the house for fear that her girlfriend would call. I told her I would not cover for her anymore and would tell her father. I did. He never spoke to her for three days. Finally I said, 'what are you going to do about this?' Finally he accepted it reluctantly, and said, 'tell the girls they can bring their boyfriends home for Christmas'.
>
> Then one night our second daughter came home and told me she was pregnant. I said, 'oh! oh!, tell dad'. She said, **'no! don't tell dad, he will kill me!'** So I told him. He said to her, **'why did you do this to me?'** I left. He stopped talking to her. Hours went by. Finally I said, 'go say something to her, she is scared you will kill her and you can't do that'. Her father was ashamed and he would not even tell his relatives about the baby. But

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[25] Two of the five inter-ethnic marriages had already had children. In both of these cases the father was Arab and in both cases the family went through a courtship crisis involving a teenage daughter. The other three cases were second generation inter-ethnic marriages and either their children had not yet reached teenage years or they did not have children.

[26] The reference here is to a *male* classmate.

somehow news got out and everyone in Lebanon knew. He did not speak to her until after the baby was born. (F7G1)

In a third case another mother reports on the scenario which unfolded when her daughter had decided to inform her father that not only is she already dating, but that her boyfriend is a non-Arab Canadian, before her father discovered the news from someone else.

She came and she said she's going to talk before he finds out from somebody else, because if there is something you do not want, it's for him to find out from somebody else. So she had the courage to tell him. So we made sure her uncles are there, and me, and we all - so in case something happens, an emergency - **and he flipped! He was CRAZY!**

I think my husband and I were on different planets. I was teaching the kids something else and he never really talked to the kids. So the first time my daughter told her father that she was dating a Canadian, he freaked out. I had to stay up all night fearful that he would do something to her. **I WAS REALLY AFRAID!**

Actually he cried the whole night and he had to go to work the next day and he did not sleep. What he was afraid of the most, our daughters they are really beautiful, he was so worried that they are going to go out and some jerk is going to hit (on) them, or hurt them, or do something, and he could not help them. He never thought girls could take care of themselves because that's how they were raised, the men take care of their women, and men take care of their girls, period. He flipped, and **'you can't go out'!**

He was upset because it was hard for him to let her go for many reasons. He always felt we married Arab Christians. Now he thinks if she marries a Canadian it will break up the family and there is no more connection. We[27] can still go back home and we have family there. Our kids generation, once they start marrying outside Arabs, start a family here, it's a different culture. (F3G1)

In this third case presented, the father decided to take a trip back to Israel. His wife had been back to Israel and tried to convey to him the changes which had occurred in his absence. "I had been back home and I tried to tell him they changed, they are different, he would not believe me."

[27] The reference here is to the first generation.

Before he left, his last words to his daughter's boyfriend were "if I ever find out you are with my daughter I am going to kill you". To his surprise, upon arriving in Israel, he encountered changes for which he was unprepared. His attitudes and perspectives regarding courtship and marriage changed almost immediately. He telephoned his wife:

> He said, 'You would not believe it here. Girls are going out with guys, they are wearing mini skirts, 'short shorts'', and 'this girl is in love with that guy'. **'Where the hell have I been all these years?'** He tried to hold onto what he left behind. 'Now they are way ahead of us. Ahead of us because we tried to imitate that life with our kids, even though they are Canadian'. So he said to me, 'Does Amira still have her boyfriend?' I said 'sometimes.' He said, 'tell her not to worry, she can see him, he's her boyfriend, I don't care'. **I could not believe it!** He said when he comes home he's going to give her his blessing that it is ok for her to date. (F3G1)

There are obvious similarities between these three cases presented. Until the courtship crisis, parents believe their children are following traditional rules and expectations. This is not the case. Second generation teenagers and young adults want to participate in the socializing norms of Canadian society, of which open dating is a part. The fathers, despite initial opposition, eventually accepted their daughters dating according to Canadian norms. These cases illustrate the beginning, the painful middle and the eventual resolution of the courtship crisis. Within each type is some variation which develops over time as the conflict is perpetuated.

VARIOUS MANIFESTATIONS OF THE COURTSHIP CRISIS

First born daughters tend to fracture the father's resistant walls and his imposition of tradition. Fathers tend to respond harshly to first born daughters who dispute his authoritarian position, as they are in fact, the first to challenge his position and the imposed tradition he represents. Although fathers generally resist the efforts these first born daughters make to oppose the proscribed cultural beliefs, some degree of success is achieved by the daughters. A certain degree of autonomy in both mobility and behavior in both socializing and dating is achieved. Although the father may 'give way' to his daughter to a certain degree at this point, an ideological change on his part has not occurred.

The first daughter and her confrontation with her father therefore, is frequently ineffectual in causing any ideological change. It is with the rebellion of the second daughter and perhaps subsequent daughters, that the father begins to change ideologically. The second daughter is often the one who steps outside of the 'Madonna' ideal: by having body adornment which is overtly opposed to the ideal – getting tattoos,[28] piercing the nose or belly-button, cutting hair short;[29] wearing androgynous or male attire, or the opposite, wears provocative clothing; carrying a cellular phone or pager;[30] running away from home, or is thrown out of the home; is sexually active while still unmarried; is living common-law; works in, and/or frequents, places considered 'less than acceptable or reputable for an Arab female according to tradition' i.e., bars or night clubs; does illegal drugs; becomes pregnant while unmarried; delivers a baby while unmarried; or otherwise fulfills all of her father's worst fears. This was found to be the case in 77% of the families[31] in this study.[32] Whether he experiences it with his first or subsequent daughters, however, it is through the experience of a failure of the authoritarian approach that fathers are forced to make major ideological and role changes.

The only daughter among many sons is often in a poor situation to get out of the "box". This is because sisters often support one another against the father. An only daughter, or daughters among *traditional* families who are not receiving support for their efforts to get out of the box, or who are unsure how to make efforts to get out of the box, tend to report feeling psychologically isolated and may often turn to female teachers at school, looking for emotional support.

Older sisters, 'break the ice' for their younger siblings, allowing their brothers and sisters to date and marry non-Arabs if they desire. One brother, referring to his elder sister who fractured the walls of tradition in their family, reports:

> We had Rheayne as the ice-breaker. A lot of times it takes the one child, the ice-breaker to take everything,

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[28] Three female respondents got tattoos during the course of this fieldwork.

[29] Short hair on a female is traditionally viewed as non-feminine.

[30] Implying her communication outside the family household cannot be supervised by the parents.

[31] Forty-nine out of sixty-three households (77.7%) had a second daughter courtship crisis occurring.

[32] In the remaining households, it was the first born daughters who enacted what was typically found with the second born daughters.

> cascade it. A lot of times kids do not break the ice because if it is a boy who is born first, then the sisters will be more passive. So it takes the one child to do something and it cascades from there. I think that's what breaks the mindset. (M1G2)

Brothers can adopt a variety of positions with regard to their sister's efforts to break out of the "box". In the above mentioned case where an older sister exists, brothers may support their sisters in their battles with their father. One second generation girl had been secretly dating a non-Arab Canadian for quite some time and intended to marry him – unbeknownst to her father. Fearing to reveal her situation to her *traditional* father alone, she called upon the assistance of her brother to interject on her behalf, as the following excerpt reveals:

> I told him 'it doesn't matter what you do, she is going to marry him. You will have to accept it'. (M2G2)

On the other hand, sometimes brothers tend to reinforce the rigidity of traditional behavior:

> Because someone called me a slut at school and my brother stuck up for me. But when I got home, he 'let me have it with both barrels'. He said, **'well obviously there is a reason why someone is calling you a slut'.** That someone must have seen me with a guy and I am not supposed to be with him. (F7G2)

It is typically brothers who adhere to a traditional Middle Eastern ideology concerning females, that tend not to give support to their sisters who are attempting to break out of the "box". In fact, they may work against the sister's efforts by "tattling" to her father for any breach of traditionally expected conduct on her part. As a result, the brother wins favor from the father, and the "box" tightens around the offending daughter.

Among *traditional* families, mothers may suffer for opposing their husband's statements or actions, thus their support for daughters efforts to break out of the "box" is usually limited.[33] Among *modern* families, mothers take the role of mediators between the father and children. Whether among a *traditional* or a *modern* family, all second generation respondents viewed and declared mothers as approachable; whereas fathers are viewed and declared

[33] See chapter four, section: 'Issues of Control'.

to be unapproachable. This is also accompanied by feelings of apprehension, as one *modern* son reveals when referring to his *traditional* male friends:

> Participating in the project has created change for my friends. They are going to try and open some more doors or at least windows for themselves. I talked to them and I said, 'I can do this, how come you can't do this?' 'Well, my dad doesn't want me to. We'll talk to him about it'. One friend said, 'well, I don't know if I can talk to my dad, but I will talk to my mom and she will try to talk to my dad about it'. Most moms are mediators. They are the ones who basically open windows for them. (M1G2)

The 'courtship crisis' affects all family members and each member goes through their own variation of crisis in their own lives. In a single family several 'courtship crises' of differing intensity may occur, depending upon number of daughters in family composition, and the time required for fathers to accept the fact that change is inevitable.

POSITION AND VOICES OF FATHERS

If mothers are mediators who open windows, then fathers are perceived as unapproachable antagonists who close doors. Yet the voices of fathers also reflect pain and anguish. The fathers initially feel frightened and shocked when they find that their daughters are dating. It seems they did not foresee that their daughters would become Canadianized. The following excerpts, which are characteristic, indicates that until the initial conflict with their daughters, many fathers were either unaware or unwilling to confront the contradictions inherent in the immigrant experience:[34]

> Why did she do this to me?' 'Why did she do this to our family?' 'What's so good about him?[35] 'Show me what's so good about him'. (M5G1)

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[34] Further elaboration of this can be found in chapter four, section: Conflict with Shame and Honor ideology.

[35] The daughter's non-Arab boyfriend.

> We always marry into our own, Arab Christian, and then we came here. If my daughter marries a Canadian, there is not that connection. Once our kids start a family here, a different culture, it is like taking away from our tradition and this hurts.[36] (M6G1)

> 'What am I suppose to do'? All of us tell him, 'nothing, what can you do? What are you going to give yourself a heart attack and die and leave us because Lena is living her own life? Let her go, let her go. I mean she is going to do what she wants dad regardless'. (F1G2)

Fathers seek guidance and approval from other male members within the extended family or from within the Arab community about decision making with regard to the behavior of one's daughters'.

> My brother will say, 'Well I let my daughter do this'. So then I tell him, 'well I guess I can let my daughter do the same'. (M7G1)

When the daughter decides she wants to marry a non-Arab this male network of counsel support for fathers becomes crucial. It is not until the father has received positive responses of support from other men, that he responds with acceptance to the situation: either with resignation (because he realizes there is nothing else he can do to alter the situation) or, with support of the daughter and her choice. Seeking approval and support from other males within the community eases the pain the father is experiencing; assists in his reaching a new perspective, level of understanding, and eventual acceptance.

> He's not going to influence her to become more of a Canadian. She is as much Canadian as she is, but she's got her Arab side too. She knows who she is, she's not going to lose herself. She doesn't have to marry an Arab to remember who she is'. (M1G1)

> He asked me 'Well what do you think of Dina's fiancee?' I said, 'he's wonderful! There is no man in the world that you are going to find better than that'. He says, 'Well

[36] A typical response by daughters to this argument presented by fathers is best illustrated by the following: "We did not come to Canada, you and mom did. We were born here. If you did not even think about 'that's what's going to happen in the future', you should have gone back when we were little and we wouldn't have a say in it. Dad, it's up to me to break traditions. It's up to me to teach my own children".

> he's not Arab'. I told him, 'well that doesn't matter. I mean who cares if he is not Arab'. (M8G1)

> If my daughter had that, oh! I would push for it, if anything. He's one of the most remarkable men, how could you ask for more? Go, I dare you to go and find an Arab man that has ever done that in his life, ever, ever, ever. You can't find any better, just be secure in that'. (M4G1)

Fathers responses affect the entire family, each creates a rippling effect throughout the whole family and influences how other children experience their own crisis in turn.

POSITION AND VOICES OF SONS

Fathers also have certain expectations concerning courtship and marriage with regard to their sons. Although most fathers arrive at a position of acceptance for their daughters dating in a Canadian-style, and to marrying non-Arab (Canadian) husbands, they are not yet prepared to let their sons go down the same path as their daughters. *Traditional* fathers hold one of three positions with regard to their sons courtship behavior: some fathers oppose their sons dating, some fathers oppose their sons dating non-Arab women,[37] other fathers allow their sons to date non-Arab women. All three positions held by *traditional* fathers hold the underlying assumption that their sons will marry an Arab or Arab-Canadian woman.

On the other hand, *modern* fathers allow, encourage and support their sons dating and choice in who he decides to date. These fathers accept that their sons may date and may marry a non-Arab woman.

> At a couple of parties I have gone to with my friends, a lot of Arab girls are there and I have talked to them and I will ask them, 'if you are not doing anything this weekend, give me a call', and they go, 'well, I don't think that will be very good'. And I will say, 'oh ya right, your father'. Their fathers are really really strict about them dating. So if I want to get involved with an Arab girl,

[37] See chapter four, section: Influence of the Female Archetype Madonna-Whore.

> there is nothing really I can do. That's why my father does not object to me going out with Canadians. (M3G2)

For sons living within *traditional* households, their father's courtship and marital expectations are not in harmony with the general desires sons have. The following was typically stated by sons in reference to *traditional* fathers who still expect them to marry an Arab (Canadian) woman:

> My father said 'she better come from a good family[38] and if you can't find a wife that is suitable, I will find one for you.' (M4G2)

> He says, 'Well I don't like her[39] family or I don't like the way things are going with you two. I don't think it will be wise for you to marry her'. I mean I could go against his wishes and marry her, but he will not be happy. He will not be happy. (M2G2)

These sons reported experiencing frustration, anger and depression due to their father's expectations and beliefs concerning courtship and marriage. In addition, they reported feeling that it was "wrong" and "unfair" that fathers agree to let them date non-Arab Canadian women, but they may not marry them. Yet, they also expressed fear and displayed apprehension in approaching their father regarding this matter.[40] As a result, sons tend to avoid confronting fathers about their conflicting positions on these issues. Rather, it is more typical to find sons engaging in subterfuge tactics[41] -- secret dating, "cutting deals", and lying, to avoid their father's authoritarian control in an area of their lives they consider "too important to be decided by anyone other than ourselves".

> I get angry at my father but I am not going to say anything to him. I still date my girlfriend and I will not tell him about it because he will ask alot of questions like 'where did you meet her'. We met in a bar. Then he'll tell me not to see her anymore. So we see each other secretly. (M5G2)

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[38] The implication being that she should be an Arab or Arab Canadian woman.

[39] The son's non-Arab girlfriend.

[40] See chapter four, section: Issues of Control.

[41] For further discussion of subterfuge stratagems sons employ to avoid their father's authoritarian control, see chapter four, section: 'Issues of Control'.

Modern young men also confirm the restricted position of their more *traditional* male friends:

> My friends have to date secretly because their parents think it interferes with alot of things like school, the family, you know, you won't have any time for the family. (M3G2)

They also confirm that their more *traditional* male friends are experiencing fear about confronting their fathers regarding the contrary desires and perspectives each hold of courtship and marriage; hence the reason for resorting to covert activity:

> They are really scared of their fathers. Their fathers do not realize, 'well they are going to do it[42] anyways'. They think, 'my sons will do what I want them to do'. (M6G2)

This tends to lead to emotional pain for the sons because they often lie about it to all concerned. Nevertheless, whether the father opposes dating in general, or dating or marriage to a non-Arab Canadian woman, secret dating by sons is commonplace just as it is for their sisters.

Given this context between fathers and sons, it is only a matter of time before fathers find themselves involved in a 'courtship crisis' between themselves and their sons. One difference in a courtship crisis between fathers and daughters (as opposed to between fathers and sons) is that with daughters, the fathers central point of contention is with the potential for tainted *'ird* hence the perpetuation of control over all aspects of their daughter's life. With sons, the breakdown of endogamy is the greater issue at stake, because of the importance and value attributed to continuance of the "bloodline". The perspective expressed by some *traditional* fathers who have "lost" their daughters to a non-Arab Canadian spouse in marriage is, "well, it's only my daughter, at least it's not my son".

Sons may not rethink their own views until they are forced to do so by their sisters conflict with their fathers. Typically heard from *modern* sons referring to their initial point of view regarding the struggle between their sister(s) and their father:

> When I was younger I did not really know any better. I thought, 'well my dad is doing it, it *must* be right'. I

[42] The reference here is to dating secretly.

> guess as I grew older I thought, 'that is not very fair because they should have equal opportunity to do what we can do. It's just not fair because it's just like me. Like let's say another Arab guy wants to date my sister. It is just like me going to try and date another Arab girl. I would be running into the same kind of problems. So I didn't want that. So my dad and I were talking about that and I explained it to him and he goes, ' well yes, that is why I am less strict on them now'. (M1G2)

THE CULTURAL CONTEXT OF THE COURTSHIP CRISIS

When it has been discovered that someone's daughter has stepped outside the narrow path, members of the Arab community step in to try to encourage the parents to disown the daughter.

> A lot of people will say, 'just leave it, it's just 'that' daughter, disown her'. But it's your daughter, she is part of your family. No one wants to do that to their child. (F6G1)

> She is Disowned. They[43] throw her out of the house. They print it in the newspaper, they wash their hands of her. (M9G1)

Thus, there are certain traditional elements within the Arab community itself operating against cultural change by punishing liberal behavior. The ideological change in the minds of fathers (and sons) goes against these conservative elements. So the father and other family members must sometimes in a sense chose between their daughters (and sisters) and their family's reputation during this crisis. This is very painful, especially if the family has been one of those conservative elements.

Shame and scandal may permanently alter the status of the family. Succumbing to pressure from the Arab community to get rid of the offending daughter may be perceived as the only way that the family can avoid shame and scandal. It may result in broken friendships and breaches within the kindred. It might even result in economic losses, as conservative families take their business elsewhere.

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[43] The reference here is to the parents.

The competition among families which exists within the (Christian) Arab community is class-based to some extent, but is also based on the degree to which behavior of family members conform to the traditionally restrictive norms. A family may lose status due to the misbehavior of its members, as the following quotes reveal.

> When the dad finds out your dating its a major conflict. It has 'defaced him'. There is lots of yelling, fighting, and the consequences get worse if it was someone else who told the parent. Because their biggest fear is 'whose Arab child is better than the next?' 'Whose child will let the parent walk in a room with their head held high or walk in a room with their head held low'? (F3G2)

> My cousin got pregnant. They're viewed over there as outcasts - and a little less because her mother is Canadian - and then our family is viewed as upper, because they say, 'oh well let's hope you guys never turn out like that, your daughters never turn out like that'. (F4G1)

Family members may not reveal details of the events which have occurred or even try to explain them away. For example, a family whose daughter has run away may claim that she is in another province at a college or university.

It is not surprising, then, that a certain level of deception was found to occur within the (Christian) Arab Canadian community. Even ideological change may be concealed. People may act and speak more conservatively around more traditional members than at home. So reality is sometimes kept behind closed-doors so as not to invoke *fadiha* and loss of status in the community as a whole.

Another consequence of *fadiha* is the psychological effect on some individual members within the community, in particular, *traditional* girls and women, whether married or unmarried. Many *traditional* females are paralyzed by the fear of 'what others will say about her and her family members'. This fear continues to empower members of the community over the individual and the affairs of their daily personal lives. As a result, it keeps them in a psychological and behavioral straightjacket - "the box".

Moreover, members of the community are aware of the power inherent in *fadiha* and the fear it can generate. In fact, fear and anxiety of *fadiha* is a *central* point of vulnerability among traditional members of the (Christian) Arab Canadian community (and to a lesser degree among some

members). The power and fear of *fadiha* can and is sometimes used to manipulate individuals within the community - if that individual allows gossip and scandal to intimidate them. Thus social control by the community and the fear of 'stepping outside' of traditionally expected norms of behavior, is one significant factor which keeps *traditional* females in the 'box'.

Traditionally, a female in the "box" brought honor to the family, stepping outside of the "box" brought shame. These ideological constructs, which still play a central role in the lives of many (Christian) Arab Canadians, are reference points from which a majority of decision-making and action or non-action are based. Moreover, these ideological constructs are activated on a daily basis in determining one's own sense of self-worth and worth within the community, and even first generation *modern* respondents are not entirely free of this influence.

It is among second generation *modern* respondents however, that one witnesses a transmutation of the ideology of honor (*'ird*) and shame. A female out of the "box" is no longer associated with shame and dishonor, as long as she conforms to Canadian norms of acceptable behavior. This transmutation to a different ideology of the feminine is what most *modern* second generation respondents adhere to today. As a result, of a broader and more three-dimensional conception of the female, the traditional ideology of honor and shame has no hold over their lives.

The traditional female archetypes, and the honor and shame complexes which are still to be found operating within the (Christian) Arab Canadian community are as mindbinding to Arab women as footbinding was to Chinese women. Also, it immersed both men and women in a behavioral code which conditions them to particular gender stereotypes. These may have been appropriate to past cultural contexts but today in Canada - and even in some Middle Eastern countries - they are not.

In summary then, Christian Arab Canadian women all report growing up within what they call "the box". The "box" is a strict behavior and dress code which is accompanied by an ideal of femininity and a lack of information regarding sexuality. This ideal of femininity is based on chastity of mind and body and may be considered the "Madonna" archetype, and it is reinforced by reference to its opposite, the "Whore". The adherence to the Madonna archetype leads to the "feminine Split"; a deep division among females in the Arab Canadian community. Those who do not remain in the "box" - are viewed negatively by those who do. This defamation is sanctioned and supported by conservative (traditional) elements within the community.

Teenage girls were found to follow several paths in their relations with young males. They either remained in the "box" and were Madonna's - at

least in public; or they dated secretly, but were eventually found out; or they dated openly. The latter two options resulted, later or sooner, in the "courtship crisis".

The "courtship crisis" was found to occur in most families. It was played out primarily as a conflict between fathers and daughters. Various manifestations of the 'courtship crisis' were found, depending upon birth order and family composition. Mothers were mediators in some cases, passive in others. Fathers were generally the most involved in the conflict and showed a variety of reactions ranging from denial to supportive behavior.

Second generation males (sons) showed a range of responses to their sisters 'courtship crisis' and also went through a less tempestuous but perhaps no less painful experience of their own, involving deception and fear of their fathers. The Arab community contains a conservative element which enforces traditional behavior (keeping females in the "box" and the generation of honor and shame based on the behavior of females) by means of gossip, scandal and even in some cases, social ostracization and economic sanctions. The sources of conflict in the 'courtship crisis' will be considered in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

CENTRAL ISSUES IN AND RESOLUTIONS OF THE "COURTSHIP CRISIS"

SOURCES OF CONFLICT

Four sources of conflict were discovered to be at the core of the 'courtship crisis' between fathers and daughters: fear of the breakdown of endogamy; fear of family shame and scandal through misconduct of one's daughters; the father's authoritative control upon almost all aspects of the daughter's life; and rejection of the imposed Madonna archetype onto one's daughters. In the course of discussing these aspects of the crisis, the conflict between family members will be illustrated by quotes not only of daughters, but also of other family members as well: mothers, fathers and sons. These issues become articulated and discussed during the unfolding of the actual crisis. At this time individuals either position themselves behind a traditional principle or they see the principle as antiquated and change their ideology.

Breakdown of Endogamy

The fear that intermarriage with non-Arabs (exogamy) will eventually lead to complete assimilation into Canadian culture constitutes one of the major sources of anxiety initially expressed by first generation parents. The following is typical:

> Ok, you guys are born here, you barely speak our language, you are more Canadianized than your own country. What is going to happen to your kids, that's it! We are gone, we are finished. I am proud of what I am and where I came from, I don't want to lose that. If our kids marry other than our people from back home, the ties are breaking and that scares me. (M6G1)

Second generation respondents confirmed this attitude which parents hold, fathers in particular :

> There is a lot of weight on tradition[1] still because they[2] want you to stay the same blood you know. They don't want things passed down to different generations because Canadians don't understand 'our ways'. We have different ways, so they think their way is the best and only way to go about it. (M1G2)

Even in the Middle East however, conflicts about exogamous marriages occur. One father explained how he and his wife had to elope because they were from different Middle Eastern countries and her father opposed their marriage:

> I kidnapped[3] my wife because her family would have refused me. I was not from the same Arab country as her, so her family saw me as an outsider. They did not know me. (M10G1)

The irony is that those fathers who went against tradition themselves during their own courtship years are now opposing their own children for challenging rules of endogamy. The demographic facts of Christian Arab Canadians are such that, initially either many fathers go back to the old country themselves to try to find mates for their children, or send their children there to look for themselves, or they bring a prospective mate here for their children. The central motivating force behind this is for an endogamous marriage:

> The reason why Arab men choose to go back to the old country to choose a wife is for the sake of their parents. My uncle, my dad's brother, he went back home. He dated Canadian women here but when it came time to marry he went back home for six months to choose his wife. He wanted to choose a wife that is Arab because he wants his kids to speak Arabic. He wants a 'full Arab family', because, my mom is Arab, my dad is Arab, all his sisters and brothers are Arab, and they are all married. He was the only one not married. So now if he married a Canadian woman he would be out of place. (M3G2)

> The reason Arab[4] men go to the old country to get a wife is because she is safe. You know exactly the way she is,

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[1] He is specifically referring to endogamy here.

[2] The reference here is to the parents.

[3] The term kidnapped was often used for this, but it means 'eloped'.

[4] The reference here is to 'Arab Canadian' men.

> exactly what she is. You know how she has been brought up and who her parents are. You know everything about her. That's why they marry a cousin. They go back to the old country for a wife because they know that when they marry a woman, it's for life. They are not just marrying for the sake of acquiring a wife, especially if they bring her here she is totally dependent upon them. She knows nobody over here, she has no family here, so there is no support for her - which is also one reason why Arab women stay in violent marriages and don't leave. (F3G2)

Sometimes, when parents go to the "old country" to visit and scout for possible mates for their children (or send their children there to look for themselves) it does not necessarily always work out as the parents expected:

> All the times the girls were growing up we thought, 'they will go back home and find decent Arab guys'. We saw no decent Arab guys[5] because of lots of different thinking, ways of living, education. So we know they would not be happy together. We came back to Canada and gave them our blessing. There is nothing wrong with marrying a Canadian, a German, Ukrainian, whatever, as long as they are the same religion. The trip was an 'eye-opener'. (F1G1)

> The kids thought they would please us by going back to the old country to find somebody and fall in love with a decent person - someone from a 'good' family. Because you know once they tell the families last name, we know if they are good material or not. But there was nothing there. (F6G1)

For those parents, or their children, who do not go to the old country for the purposes of mate-selection, the obvious place to look for marital partners is the local Christian Arab Canadian community. This however, proves to be disappointing to many parents. Demographically, the numbers of acceptable male suitors are small, and the numbers of economically well-off acceptable male suitors even smaller. The result of these dismal marital prospects is often a change in attitude in the direction of exogamy:

> At first my father did not allow me to date. Then he looked around at the choices I had here. The Arabs were cab drivers, working at 7-11[6], so now he encourages us[7] to marry outside our ethnic group. (F8G2)

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[5] The reference here is to Arab males in the old country.

[6] 7-11's are small all-night convenience stores in Canada.

This raises the issue of how parents will react to the breakdown of endogamy. It would seem that this would cause even greater concern than dating itself, and be perhaps one of the factors motivating paternal resistance to dating on the part of fathers. Data collected during this study indicated that marriage to non-Arabs was acceptable within certain limits. In fact, it appeared Christian Arab Canadian fathers were far more tolerant of inter-ethnic[8] marriages than of casual dating relationships. The problem was not inter-ethnic marriage, provided the man was Christian and had a good income or prospects. But he must not be a Jew or Muslim, nor must he be Black. Eckholy (1969) also found resistance towards inter-marriage with Blacks in his study of Muslim Arab Americans in Toledo and Detroit (31).

Resistance to the breakdown of endogamy is less dramatic than resistance to dating because by the time an inter-ethnic marriage occurs, fathers are either so exhausted from battling their daughters over dating that the prospects of a respectable non-Arab Christian Canadian son in-law comes as a relief; or they have come to realize in their confrontations with their daughters that marriage to an Arab would actually destroy their daughters' happiness.

Acceptance of fairly high levels of exogamy was found by both Jabbra (1983) in her study of three Arab-Canadian extended families in Nova Scotia, and by Wassef (1978) in her study of Montreal Egyptians. In the present study, *traditional* Christian Arab Canadian women who divorce their husbands are viewed as no longer acceptable to Arab men and must marry non-Arabs, if they remarry at all. *Modern* women rarely find an Arab man acceptable to date or marry. Finally, even if they were to consider marrying Arabs, the demographic facts are such that very few Christian Arab men are available for them to choose from. Therefore most of the young Arab Canadian women in the sample seemed destined to marry non-Arab Canadians.

Issues of Control

A second issue at the core of the crisis is the father's authoritarian control imposed upon most aspects of life of other family members, in particular female members. Fathers view their position as head of the household, one in which all other family members must defer to, even ideologically. From the fathers perspective, this position is their 'right'. They hold an expectation of adherence to this deference as a show of respect and acknowledgment of that right. Some

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[7] The reference here is to her brothers and sisters.

[8] Eckholy (1969) reports that Christian Arab Americans "encourage" inter-ethnic marriages.

sons[9] willingly adhere to their father's authoritarian position and in fact support it. These sons view their father's authoritarian role as an advantageous position of control. They believe that by supporting their fathers' authoritarian position, and perpetuation of traditional norms and ideologies, that they are ensuring the same advantageous position for themselves in the future when they have their own families.

From the perspective of most other family members however, the rigid authoritarian position of the father (and husband) is experienced as being imposed and enforced upon them.

> No matter how old I am, if my father told me to do something right now, I couldn't say 'no, you don't own me'. No matter how old I am, I would get a whack across my face. He uses that 'you're under my roof, my rules'. (M6G2)

Family members reported the father viewed 'his word' as the 'final word'. Many wives in this study stated, "to him, his final word is holy". To oppose his viewpoint is perceived as shameful, disrespectful and a breach of his authoritarian position. Thus, the father is the central reference point for all decision-making and activities which go on in the family home.

Initially most children adhere to their father's authoritarian position because parents (and extended family members) have taught them that it is shameful and disrespectful to oppose him; and because of the fear, guilt and shame which they report experiencing for doing otherwise. This may still invoke apprehension in children - no matter how old they are.

> **Fear! Fear of punishment! That's what keeps you in the box. Fear of the punishment.** All my life I was told the punishment was to be pulled on the front step and cut your head off, right, and those are the stories I heard. They really instill those stories into your head that that will really actually happen. That was my biggest fear. Plus all of my friends that it did happen to. One girlfriend was sent back to Syria as soon as her father found out she had a boyfriend. My other girlfriend had to change her identity. These are major things. I didn't want major things to happen. I just wanted to live a normal Canadian life. I didn't want sex or anything like that. I just wanted a boyfriend and I wanted to be able to go to the movies with him and to date and to go out with my friends. I just wanted those mild things. I don't see anything wrong with it. But it was my father who wouldn't let me

[9] This was found to be the case among *traditional* first and second generation sons.

> because of shame, and fear that something would ruin my reputation. (F3G2)

> It's guilt built up over many years. It's what the parents use to control them[10] with, the shame is guilt. I feel severe guilt inside. My dad did it to me for years. The issue is control. His control over us. 'I gave you everything'[11] - but not emotionally. We are adults, we can handle responsibility. (F11G2)

As a result of the pressure experienced to comply with their fathers expectations and demands, many second generation adult children reported they were not free to engage in their own decision-making regarding many affairs of their own life.[12] Both first and second generation adults confessed to following through with their parents wishes, knowing it was not what they wanted themselves and knowing the result would be "bad". The underlying message sent out by parents is that the children are never going to be 'mature enough' to make their own decisions for themselves.

> My friends[13] get opposed from dating. When they try to, their parents say, 'don't do this or else'. When they do, they reprimand him. Like they punish him for it. 'You are not ready to date. You can't control yourself. Maybe you shouldn't start dating for about another year'. They say, 'you can't date' or 'you can't see that girl'. (M6G2)

In fact, this underlying message is still projected onto the adult-child when they are in their late-twenties and late-thirties. The degree to which this occurred varied from household to household. Even men in their late-thirties reported that they would not date a woman without first considering how their parents might

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[10] The reference here is to one's children.

[11] The reference here is to material goods.

[12] This was also found to be the case among some first generation unmarried adults. In this case for example, although the parents were in the old country, traditional expectations transcended distance and still exerted a pressure upon the more *traditional* Christian Arab Canadians. This creates an inner conflict with regard to the individual's behavior: either to express one's individuality or to adhere to the traditional expectations and obligations, which are more group oriented.

[13] The reference here is to his *male* friends.

react if they met her, or heard about it.[14] To become serious about a woman without considering how she will be received by the family is almost unthinkable.

Yet, in Canadian society, courtship and marriage are seen as areas too significant in one's life to be decided by someone other than oneself. Hence one major reason for rebellion on the part of second generation sons and daughters is the exposure they have to this view. It is the daughters who begin to openly contest their fathers authoritarian role and express their anger at the tactics used to control their courtship and marital intentions. It is not surprising then to find that any opposition to this image and position that fathers hold of themselves, is met with harsh resistance.

> My dad said things to me in the past when we argued that we treat him like a friend. 'I'm not your friend, I'm your father'. So he wants respect and the only way he figures he can get it is...he thinks if he's too kind to us, we'll take advantage of him. It's almost like he fears us you know, which is awful, because that's not true. We respect him a great deal. There's no need for him to be cool in order to earn our respect. (F1G2)

Initially, these confrontations with the father are usually unsucessful on the part of daughters, and brothers observe and note this. Hence, the message received by most second generation teenagers and adult children at this point is that if they display any opposition to their father's authoritarian assertions - no matter how unreasonable they may be, they will not influence him to change. The decision made by a majority of teenagers (both male and female) at this point is to respond to this rigidity by displaying an appearance of conformity with the father's demands. The motive for this presentation of compliance is to utilize any coping mechanism which will preserve peace within the family, even if it is a false presentation of peace. Hence the subterfuge strategems employed by both daughters and sons. The emotional and mental anguish experienced by second generation teenagers and young adults as a price for this dishonest presentation, is enormous.

It is with the daughters that this coping strategy of false presentation of compliance to the father breaks down. Young adult daughters are the first to realize that 'to oppose' does not imply disrespect nor shame. The inner turmoil they are experiencing from the turbulence generated by the concurrence of the

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[14] The actual quote reads: "The biggest problem, first of all dating non-Arab person. 'ok I love this woman, Canadian or Arab, doesn't matter.' He (reference here is to Arab men in general) will always think about his parents and his parents always think about the community. See, we don't disregard, we don't put on the side our parents involvement in this issue".

other three issues[15] culminating during the courtship crisis, is when most daughters realize they can no longer maintain a false presentation of compliance and silence within the family, and eventually confront the father (and hence tradition) revealing their own ideological and behavioral position.

During a conflict between father and daughter, the wife must not openly oppose her husband in front of the children as it would be viewed as a disgrace, an act of shame. Concern is not focused on whether or not the father's position is correct or not, but rather on "saving face" and "not disgracing him in front of anyone". This means, not opposing his perspective, no matter how unrealistic it may be. "It would make him look bad". The mother can speak privately to the husband on behalf of her daughter, but not in front of the daughter. This behavior on the mother's part reinforces the patriarchal authoritarian system of no voice and no choice for females.

It was found that because sons have not yet reached a point of confrontation with their fathers, they are still complying with the father's rules and expectations for the sake of appearances, while engaging in opposing beliefs and behavior covertly.

> My friends try to establish a buddy-buddy relationship with their fathers and they won't really speak out about any views he has. So it really doesn't let them speak out about any of their honest opinions. They can't really stick up for their sisters because that opposes the father. They can't take their side because the father goes, **'What! are you taking their side?'** To this day, not one of my friends have been able to oppose their father's views on anything. (M2G2)

Sons devise their own ways and means of rebelling and coping with this authoritarian imposition. Through a network of peers, deception is employed as each "covers" for one another, and in this way gains the mobility and freedom they seek, much in the same way their sisters do.

> Alot of my friends get angry, **really angry**! They are not going to say anything to their fathers, so they just date girls secretly. We cover for one another. We don't say we are at a bar. We say, 'oh they are at the store, they will be right back'. Either that, or my brother or cousin will call[16] me and

[15] Breakdown of endogamy, honor and shame, and the imposed Madonna archetype.

[16] Through the use of cellular telephones. Many second generation respondents in this study had personal cellular phones.

let me know my dad is looking for me. So I call my dad back and tell him I am just at a friends house, we went out to the store. We are playing video games. (M1G2)

Or sons will 'cut a deal' with their fathers, as was reported earlier in the previous chapter:

> They like to send their children *back home*[17] to basically get engaged **NOW** and my friends don't like it, but they have no choice. It is disrespectful to say 'no' to your father. They say to their dad, 'well dad, I don't think the time is right now'. So they put him off, buy some time. They just wait until the confrontation and their father says, 'let's go, you're not getting any younger'. Then they say, 'I looked and I didn't see anything I liked'. Their dad says, 'fine'. Then they will make a deal with their fathers. They will say, 'ok if I go there and there isn't anyone who is suited for me, can I choose a Canadian girl'?[18] Usually the father thinks about it. They might say 'yes', rarely, but they might. They might say 'no'. My friends tell me they wish they had my dad because he is so open-minded and you know he is not just closed-minded on the ***'just Arab girls. That's it!'***. Mind you, my dad would like me to marry an Arab girl, but he wouldn't hold it against me if I don't. (M1G2)

> Two of my friends, their fathers asked them to go back to the 'old country' for wives. They do not want to go. They said they will go because their dads asked them but they will tell him they did not find anyone who was right for their wife. If that does not work then they will try and 'cut a deal' with their father. Like, 'you know, I was dating a girl here before I left dad. I would like you to meet her'. (M6G2)

One young man reporting on his experience with his father's expectation of him marrying an Arab women that he had no desire to do:

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[17] To the parent's Middle Eastern country of origin.

[18] Many of these young men were already involved in relationships with non-Arab Canadian women for several years when they 'cut a deal' with their fathers. Although fathers were aware of their sons involvement with a non-Arab Canadian women, they were not aware that their sons had marital intentions towards the particular woman, nor that they had intentions of marrying any non-Arab Canadian woman. 'Cutting a deal' with the fathers as a course of least resistance illustates the reluctance on the part of sons to confront fathers and inform them of their marital intentions directly.

> I have dated a couple of Canadian women but then my dad says, **'come on, there are *other* people!'** He sent me both my brother and I to Israel to try to find someone to marry. When we came back I told my dad 'I had found a few and maybe I'll think about them. I'll write them and see if they are worthy'. (M4G2)

In fact this young man lied to his father, in that he had no intentions of considering an Arab woman as a wife. To appease his father he presented the appearance of 'looking for an Arab wife' in the old country. Thus some sons try to 'cut a deal' with their fathers by agreeing to go to the old country to search for an Arab wife, hoping that if they report they cannot find a suitable one, they be allowed to marry a non-Arab Canadian woman.

Fathers who have not altered their ideological position with regard to courtship and marriage and their sons, even after experiencing a courtship crisis with their daughters, will most likely experience a courtship crisis with their sons. In fact, many second generation teenagers and young adults recognize that parents will probably have to go through an intense confrontation in order for change to occur.

> More of my friends are rebelling now. It takes that one person in the family to rebel against the parents for them to even notice there is a problem. More will rebel. **Definitely!** Parents can expect more rebellion, more sneaking around, drinking, drugs, running away, until parents 'let up' a little. We want to be heard. (M4G2)

Many second generation young adults are not willing to tolerate a perpetuation of the traditional patriarchal authoritarian structure. This traditional structure has outgrown its usefulness. Adult children want to be responsible for their own decision making, especially in the context of courtship and marriage.

> It's really sad to see what a lot of parents are doing to their kids, arranging marriages and stuff like that. I mean, it's **YOUR** life, so I say you should be able to make decisions that will benefit you in the long run. But they are decisions you want to make because **'it's your life.** This is what's going to happen **to you**, not your parents, **to you**. (M1G2)

Conflict With the Honor and Shame Ideology

Following the initial collaspe of parental opposition to inter-ethnic dating, and in tandem with the confrontations over control issues, shame, honor, and the fear of *fadiha* now arises as a cause of enormous conflict. Surprisingly, it is over this issue that the most turbulence occurs. The basis of this conflict is ideological and rooted in culture. When a Christian Arab father berates his daughter, he does so not by referring to 'Christian morality', but rather by making reference to 'cultural[19] tradition'.

Fadiha, (scandal) as was discussed earlier, may result in disrespect, lowered status, and ostracization of the family by the Arab community. This is far worse than the perceived consequences of an exogamous marriage or occasional flaunting of parental authority. One reason for this is that a scandal may outlive its perpetrators.

> It can go on from the minute it happens, all the way up to twenty years. My cousin ran away from home, but she did not come back pregnant, or with a child. Yes she made a mistake, ok. Ya, we will talk about it for the rest of our lives. (F6G2)

Another informant states:

> Oh! Shame will go into the scrapbook that gets passed down.[20] (F9G2)

The fact that traditionally females are the vehicles which can create tainted *'ird* through any perceived sexual misconduct, is the reason why courtship and dating become such hot issues of contention for parents. Fathers fear the same judgments and consequences regarding the behavior of one's daughters may unfold within the Canadian context.

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[19] Dodd (1973) states that "*'ird* appears to be a secular value rather than a religious one. The term does not appear in the Qur'an, although both the term and the very high value attached to it existed among pre-Islamic Arabs. Islamic teachings regarding women's status and male-female relationships may be regarded as supporting the *'ird* indirectly, but it is not per se an Islamic pattern" (44).

[20] The implication here being there is a "scrapbook of gossip and scandal" on every family within the Arab Canadian community.

> **I can't believe it! What if people hear about this?** What if people saw her[21] driving around at 2:00 a.m. with this guy? Then they are going to come to us. They are going to say 'she is a slut because she was out at 2:00 a.m.' **Our name is going to be dragged through the mud!** (M11G1)

> If the daughter runs away 'it's the parents fault. You didn't raise your child good enough. She's running away for a reason'. The family is disgraced. Everybody looks down on them, they are talked about, they are left out of things, their name is not used, you know it is not brought up in conversation....it's like that with the family, you know it's 'that' family. 'That' family. That's what they say, 'that' family and whoever has the same last name, you know. (F10G2)

> Everything that happens is kept pretty 'hush hush' and if it's found out, if it's something big, someone's daughter is a prostitute or someone's gotten pregnant or whatever, it's a pretty big deal. It's not that their ostracized but they are sort of avoided. They're not really invited over to your home and that kind of thing and it depends on how close you are to them. Ya it's a shame. Gossip is really a huge factor, really it'll make you or break you. (F12G2)

This apprehension underlies the battle over control issues, especially as applied to daughters. Because it is the daughter's behavior and misbehavior that has a primary role in creating or destroying family honor, father's insist on their adherence to traditional behavioral practices.

> If the guy comes to the house for the girl, **kick him out!** His parents or guardian **must come** and approach the family. (M10G1)

> There is no shame if they get engaged and then date, but if they date and are not engaged, then there is shame. (M9G1)

During courtship for daughters, her behavior is constantly monitored, a carry-over from the chaperone institution. Parents impose their own involvement within the process by demanding to know 'any activity and forward movement in intimacy between a couple', which is then subjected to parental approval. The following illustrates this point:

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[21] The reference here is to his daughter.

> Tradition, she's got to be monitored, not to the point of chaperoned, but monitored. It's got to be a commitment right away and no hanky panky, nothing like that. That is tradition - where *they*[22] have got to be in control. They have got to know exactly and absolutely every single movement and if the couple wants to take a 'step up', the parents are the ones who have to say, 'ok you can keep going' **but Commitment! Engagement now! Get a ring!'** (F9G2)

Parents within *modern* households know they can no longer impose a traditional engagement process upon their children if their mate is a non-Arab Canadian. Yet, parents still expect and 'push' indirectly for engagement of the couple as soon as possible. This stems from the fact that an engagement represents a public announcement to the community and therefore an approved license for the couple to be together alone while not yet married. One second generation *modern* daughter referring to her father's expectation regarding engagement states:

> My own father still clings to this image! He said to me, 'ok, you have gone out for three years now, at least get a ring, so if you want to go on a vacation together...' There are still those who will tattle and gossip and my dad wants to spare himself and me putting up with that. 'Even if you are engaged then you could go on vacation and no one would say a word'. I don't see the point. If we broke up six months later, it would be more embarrassing to me. 'Oh, she was engaged and now she's not, what's the problem'. (F11G2)

Mothers are more willing to trust their daughters' to be responsible in action and thought in dating and socializing activities, than fathers. It is the fathers fear of loss of respect in the Arab community and the idea that their daughters will shame them and proclaim them as being unqualified to raise their children appropriately which is of major concern.

Daughters however reject this imposed traditional ideology and behavior believing it to be antiquated and inappropriate in the Canadian setting:

> If you do not want to disgrace yourself then open your eyes to what's going on around you and there would be no disgrace. Your daughters would respect you if there was mutual respect there. Then she would not do anything to shame or disgrace you. It's a two way street. You can't expect your daughters to respect you when you treat them

[22] The reference here is to the parents.

like cotton-pickers way back in the 1700's. It's not going to work. (F9G2)

Parents realize there are not that many Christian Arabs out there so we will have to marry a Canadian. Also, they cannot enforce Arab courtship rules of interrogation and restriction on the Canadian guy, he is not going to say, 'ok I'd get engaged with your daughter before I date her, **No!**' Third, if they want their daughter to find a decent husband, they have to let her do that. (F2G2)

When it comes to the son's behavior, however liberal the parents may be in allowing their sons to date non-Arab women, the fear of shame is still a concern. The following advice, which parents give to their sons, illustrates this:

They don't want the guy to get a bad name for himself. So that's why they say 'don't go out in public with her[23] because what if one of our friends see you, then they will know'. Then they would have to come up with a story for why you were with her. (M6G2)

As the previous sections have demonstrated, sons are not complying with traditional expectations and are in fact "dating behind their father's backs". This is universally acknowledged; most young men, however, are aware of the possibility of dishonoring their families and seem to try to avoid it.

It was going to happen anyway behind his back.[24] It would have happened anyway. It's all in the family name. Nobody wants to have their family name run through the dirt because once it is there, it stays there. All these stories just keep popping up about the same family, about the things they have done or 'they are a bad family because they do this' or because this happened and it kind of sticks to you. The story just keeps getting passed down and down and down. (M2G2).

It is because of its relative freedom and anonymity, that the Canadian dating style appeals to all unmarried respondents in this study. The following excerpts are typical expressions of the view towards the Canadian dating style:

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[23] The reference here is to non-Arab Canadian women.

[24] The reference here is to dating secretively.

> It's free and you can just do it and nobody sits there going, 'oh she's a slut because she's done all.... you know with this guy. And it's not so conservative. There's no chaperoning stuff and if you kiss a guy on the first date your not right off the whack. It's not tabu. You don't have to be married off by twenty or you're a prune. (F9G2)

> I like the anonymity. It allows mobility, the freedom to go and do whatever you want, as opposed to living in an Arab country where you have less freedom and everyone 'knows your business'. (M3G1).

Christian Arab Canadian men and women who most completely reject the imposed Middle Eastern ideals tend to be assertive in self-expression, and have very little contact with the community. They live, more or less, a Canadian lifestyle. For these individuals, the power of 'what others think' does not effect them in the same manner and depth, as it does more 'traditional' members of the community. They no longer use as a reference point, the traditional value structure of honor and shame for assessing self-worth and worth within the community. This degree of detachment from their cultural community is harder for women than for men. This is because women are subjected to additional pressures to conform to a behavioral stereotype. These pressures are imposed by the Madonna-Whore archetype.

Influence of the Female Archetype Madonna-Whore

> A barrier is erected when a subordinated, private and veiled woman is contrasted to a liberated, public and naked woman - one of them does not have equal rights, but is respected; the other has equal rights, but not much respectability. (Koturk 1992:130 citing Youseff 1974)

Koturk (1992) then adds to this, "this is akin to the Madonna/whore duality, which has confused and divided women throughout the ages" (130). The use of this term "Madonna-Whore" arose in this present study independent of its use in the Koturk study (1992). This is very encouraging as it indicates the objective reality of this value system and of this stereotyping of the feminine in Middle Eastern cultures. The 'courtship crisis' exposes the two-dimensional and static nature of the ideal female archetype of Middle Eastern culture. In order to adapt to the current Canadian context it must first be dismembered and then reassembled. This is in fact part of the process of acculturation.[25] The emerging

[25] Acculturation has been defined as "major culture changes that people are forced to make as a consequence of intensive first hand contact between societies" (Haviland 1994:648). In this case the major culture change is an ideological one. Specifically, a set of Middle Eastern female

aspects of the feminine ideal of the Arab Canadian sub-culture will then be more suitable to the spirit of the times and the geographic locality. Thus in this study it was found that new ideals are emerging for females which are broader, more indepth, and more holistic in expression, than the extreme images of the previous archetypal opposition. Young women are no longer trying to be "Madonnas", nor are they assuming that the only alternative to this is to be a "Whore". The Canadian cultural context allows for more than two choices. Sexuality and honor are not mutually exclusive in this context.

Men's Voices

Although fathers come to accept the breakdown of endogamy for daughters, some still believe, encourage, and sometimes demand, that their sons marry a Christian Arab (Canadian) woman. A minority of *traditional* Christian Arab Canadian males still do seek a wife whose behavior and belief systems correlate with the traditional Middle Eastern feminine archetype:

> When I get married my wife is going to be home all the time and she'll do everything I want her to. (M7G2)

> I don't care if the girl is ugly or anything. I want a girl just like my mom.[26] (M5G2)

Many sons however have no interest in marrying, nor even dating, an Arab or Arab Canadian woman. In fact, qualities which so many traditional Arab women aimed to replicate in order to get a husband, are now working against them, as many (Christian) Arab (Canadian) males no longer pursue these qualities in women.

> I date Canadian women because not many Arab girls have an education. I don't want an uneducated woman. I want a woman with set goals. Most are waiting for their fathers to

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archetypes are undergoing a process of transmutability in which the form, nature and substance are becoming more three dimensional and holistic in both attributes and expression. As a consequence, the interconnected constructs of honor (*'ird*) and shame are also undergoing transformation. Thus unmarried women who have sexual knowledge and experience, who marry later in life, who pursue higher education and a career, and who embody dress codes contrary to traditional ideals, are no longer viewed as shameful; nor are they viewed as a whore.

[26] The implied message here is he wants a wife who will maintain traditional Middle Eastern feminine roles within the marriage, specifically, subservience in this case.

> marry them off. I don't want an Arab woman because really, the reality they live in, is too small. (M6G2)

> I told him, 'Dad, look at these girls[27] I had to pick from, they don't have any good qualities. You want me to marry them, there isn't much to them. They have no goals, they're not independent, not educated, they don't work. All they want to do is get married, have kids, stay at home and gossip. (M3G2)

Many second generation males both *traditional* and *modern*, are seeking a woman who is more independent in thought and behavior than was traditionally expected and imposed on Arab women for centuries. Typical preferences stated by second generation unmarried male respondents with regard to the qualities they were seeking in a woman are:

> I want a woman to have brains and status, to know where she is going. Someone who can also support themselves, can do their own sort of thing. And somebody who is outgoing and would let me have my time with my friends and she can have her time with her friends. (M2G2)

In fact, preferences for women who are more independent in behavior and thought is even expressed by Arab males still living in the Middle East. One second generation young adult woman[28] referring to a suitor who still resides in the Middle East and corresponds with her through letters, reports:

> I told him 'don't waste your money because this is the way I am'. I laid it out on the line for him. He said, 'No, I can handle that because the reason I want to come to Canada is to make my life better because I see the women here and you know that's not the (kind of) woman that I want. I want a woman that can think for herself, a woman who wants something for her life, not just to sit home and have babies and gossip you know. I want someone who I know I can go out with and have a good time with or sit at home, but I want want a woman with a mind of her own. (F13G2)

One of the reasons why these males are seeking non-Arab women as wives is because they feel Arab (Canadian) women who live according to the

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[27] The reference here is to Arab Canadian girls.

[28] This quote is from a cousin of one of the respondents in the study.

traditional expected feminine roles and display traditional behavior and thought are 'static'. Unfortunately, in their eagerness to embrace exogamous unions, some of these men are overlooking the Arab (Canadian) women who have rejected the Madonna archetype as a model to adhere to and already embody the very qualities they are seeking.

In spite of these changes in preferences, sons may run into opposition from their fathers due to the male perception of the female as a vessel of procreation and continuation of the family line. When it comes to the marriage of their sons, fathers still hold on to the ideal of the Madonna archetype.

> My sons date Canadian women for years now. But they **will marry Arab women. There is no alternative!** It's ok for my sons to date Canadian women to satisfy their sexual needs, but not to marry. They are **MEN!** You can't expect them to wait until they are married - they have to satisfy their sexual needs. They cannot wait until they are married, they are not like women. (M10G1).

Moreover, this Madonna stereotype still affects how fathers see their daughters. They expect them to marry while young, to have children and to essentially disappear into a family circle in another man's home. They do not see their daughters as independent individuals.

Women's Voices

Some girls perceive this 'lack of interest' by Arab Canadian males to dating an Arab Canadian woman as the following reveals:

> The Arab guys that hang around down there smoking and stuff, if I walk by I don't even get a second glance. Like they know I am Arab, so I'm sort of, I don't know if it's that they figure that I'm inferior or something or not sexy enough. I've noticed a lot of the Arab guys will hang out with white girls - the kinds with the big boofy hair, really nice clothes, you know very trendy, the kind of the 'sexy girl'. (F8G2)

> Arab men at university - I think of them as 'greasy'. It seems like Arab men want white women and not Arab women. They seem to view Arab women as a 'come down' because they see themselves as so hip and cool. Why would you want an Arab woman when you can have a white chick? I want nothing to do with them because I know what they are like. Many of them are so much like their fathers. The guys

> retain much of their fathers. The man dominates, is closed-minded, and they beat their girlfriends. (F2G2)

Given such perceptions, it is not surprising to find then, that the majority of second generation women also expressed no desire to even date an Arab (Canadian) male:

> Arab men who approach me to date, I say, 'no'. They say, 'why not? I'm your kind'. I say, 'I'm not interested'. Frankly, I've seen the way they are. I'm not attracted to them whatsoever. They are smug, many have nothing but attitude. They could be working in retail sales and think that they are 'way up the ladder', they are not. It's the attitude they have. They figure the rest of the Arab men 'have got my back covered if anything happens'. They are smug. They have got that attitude because their fathers brought them up that way. The mother is passive. They want a wife to be the same. This is their attitude. (F9G2)

> They're arrogant! They expect women to be a little bit subservient. I just get that feeling. (F6G2)

> Well these Arab guys are really egoistic and so closed-minded, that's the nicest I can put it without calling them assholes. They always say, 'Damn Canadian women. Women in general here don't know their damn place in life'. That's what they say. Some Arab men are not like that, they are more liberal. My friend is an Arab. You wouldn't know it because of how nice he is to women. Last week we went out somewhere and my girlfriend says to me **'My God, he's an Arab!'** She couldn't believe it because he's nothing like the others. He likes independent women. That's the only thing he will 'go for', nothing less, nothing less. He loves Canadian women because of that fact. (F11G2)

> I shy away from them. They think they are superior, that women will melt under their gaze. They are full of themselves, macho. (F5G2)

In fact, the majority of Christian Arab Canadian women in this study expressed a desire to marry a non-Arab Canadian. The following is a typical attitude held and heard among *modern* and some *traditional* second generation Christian Arab Canadian women in regards to marrying an Arab (Canadian) man:

> I would not marry an Arab man, not even if I was pregnant. **Never! Never! Never! They turn into such savages!** (F4G2)

Thus, a commonly held perspective among both male and female second generation Christian Arab Canadians is a desire to have a non-Arab mate. Given this tendency, fathers come to the harsh realization that endogamy and traditional courtship practices cannot be maintained and continued in a Canadian setting. Both arranged and endogamous marriages were becoming rarer and were no longer the norm for the second generation.

Most mothers, although they saw their daughters' futures in more liberal terms, had less impact during the crisis than fathers. Mothers in some cases (*modern* mothers) provided support for their daughters in rejecting the projected and antiquated ideal of the female. In most cases the mothers have less effect. *Traditional* (Christian) Arab Canadian women in fact perpetuate the traditional Middle Eastern feminine Madonna archetype. The following is a recorded conversation between a *traditional* mother and daughter regarding what the daughter should do because she stated she was unhappily married.

> Mother: Never tell anyone your problems because everyone is in the same boat as you are and they are keeping silent. So should you also keep silent.
>
> Daughter: **No! not all families are living like that.**
>
> Mother: Other families just 'beef up' how good their marriages are to look good. But that is not what is really happening.

This encouragement to remain silent, this message of *no voice - no choice* perpetuates the "box".

In addition to the messages sent out to the girl, and the female role models provided for her from within her extended family, other factors which keep a girl inside the 'box' are: her perceived financial dependence on the parents, her low self-esteem, lack of outside contacts, lack of mobility, and her fear to initiate movement outside of the expected traditional roles for a traditional Arab woman. One *traditional* Christian Arab Canadian young adult woman in her mid-twenties discussing why she continues to live in the parental home when she states she is unhappy due to the restrictions her father imposes upon her, states:

> Like I said, the insecurity, I'm confused. Ok if I leave that's my first step, no problem. I'll get a job, that's my second step, and then I'll get an apartment, that's my third step, no problem. Ok but what about the future? What if I want to go to university? What if I find my knack is in business management, how do I get to Nait and pay that $5000 a year to get through it? How? My parents buy me everything I need. (F7G2)

Many girls in their twenties, continue to stay and live under restricted conditions in the family home because they are trying to acquire higher education. The majority have their financial needs taken care of by the parents, so that creates an incentive for some to continue staying where they are. Because they have lived under these conditions all their life, they are familiar with how to 'covertly play outside the rules of the game' thus, survive the situation they are in. It's a price some are willing to pay to ensure their higher educational and financial needs are met. Many females who were students during this fieldwork project were in the above-mentioned position, and all had plans to leave the family home upon completion of their schooling.

Surprisingly, acquiring higher education is not a guarantee for dissolving ingrained cultural traditions, no matter how absurd they may appear. For example, one Christian Arab Canadian woman who had a post-secondary education and worked as a counselor to immigrant woman, stated she had the opportunity to counsel many mothers whose daughters behave outside of 'traditionally expected norms'. She revealed many mothers complained that their daughters were sexually active, though not yet married. The advice this counselor provides in such a situation, is rather culturally outdated:

> As a counselor, many woman say to me, 'my daughter is having sex and she is not married'. Then I say, 'hurry and get her married, then use birth control'. (code withheld to ensure anonymity)

Although higher education for Arab woman can now bring honor to her family, the underlying expectations by parents for her to marry is still present. A woman's life is viewed as incomplete without marriage, irrespective of how much she may have achieved in other areas of her life. Referring to her father who continually drops hints for her to marry, one *modern* Christian Arab woman in her mid-twenties who chose to pursue a post-secondary education, reveals the continuance of this belief:

> My dad is continually saying things like, 'when are you going to give up your room, we need the space. Time is passing, you're not getting any younger'. (F9G2)

All Christian Arab Canadian women in the sample population are aware of the double standards and gender inequalities which exist in a major proportion of (Christian) Arab (Canadian) homes. Some young girls express the need to 'branch out' from the family home because the traditionally expected behavioral codes for females and the roles of wife and mother are perceived to be 'too restricting', and some women in the Canadian context "want more". As a result, a growing number of Arab Canadian women in the age group of eighteen to thirty are becoming more consciously aware that this is not what they want in their life. Unmarried (Christian) Arab Canadian females are choosing their own mates, many are non-Arab, and they are opting out of a traditional Arab lifestyle.

> My sister left home. She is much happier living on her own in a Canadian lifestyle. (F6G2)

For some of these women however, this has resulted in an inner conflict between pursuing traditional roles of marriage and motherhood or pursuing higher education and a career first. On the one hand, peers are getting married and are having children and there is pressure from parents and the Arab community to marry and follow traditional routes. On the other hand, the woman's inner desire is to branch outside of traditional female roles and broaden her life's experiences. One second generation *modern* Christian Arab Canadian woman in her late-twenties referring to the inner conflict she experiences, states:

> It's just that sometimes I look at my friends who are getting married all around me and people who are settling in, buying homes and having lives and I'm just starting. Part of me still feels like 'oh, is it passing me by, you know?' (F1G2)

Today at the turn of the twenty-first century, not only has the the age in which *modern* (Christian) Arab (Canadian) women marry increased, but many are opting for a 'later marriage'. These women are living common-law, children born out of wedlock are becoming more common, and higher education and career have become more commonplace pursuits.

Neither the North American context nor the ideologic climate of the times today provide any fertile ground for the traditional Middle Eastern female archetypes to be maintained. The options open to women today are much more comprehensive than those which were offered to Arab women traditionally. Given the choice and opportunites to live one's life with fuller self-expression and self-fulfillment, very few Christian Arab Canadian women are choosing to perpetuate the traditional roles once imposed upon Arab women.

RESOLUTION OF THE CONFLICT

The phases of the *resolution* are interrelated. Honor and shame are connected to the Middle Eastern female archetypes. These archetypes represent models for enforcing women to remain true to, or live up to the Madonna ideal because the alternative, shame, is attached to anything that deviates publically from that archetype. Correspondingly, these ideological constructs are connected to issues of control because it is the father who tries to control the daughter's behavior from bringing shame upon the family. Hence, discussion of the resolution of these issues will be presented concurrently.

There are basically three positions taken by fathers in response to this crisis which occurs when daughters breach traditional codes of behavior. These are "rejection", "truce" and "acceptance".

"Rejection"

The strongest reaction displayed by some fathers is a denial of the daughters existence when the expected traditional codes of behavior have been breached. Daughters are ignored, their names are unmentioned, they are publicly disowned, ostracized by the family, in particular the father, and sometimes by the entire Arab community. In some cases these daughters may be sent to the 'old country' to be 'married off', or a suitor, chosen by the father, is brought here to marry the daughter.

"Truce"

The issues which created the crisis are not resolved. In fact they are literally ignored. This allows parties to live together without tension that might escalate into further crisis. Fathers are not willing to let go of traditional ideological adherence. Families maintain a false sense of harmony and security by ignoring inappropriate behavior or breaches of unacceptable standards committed by daughters. This self-deceit is a temporal phase, as pressures continue to mount until crises overwhelms the family.

"Acceptance"

The third response in the course of conflict resolution involves a father's rejection of the Middle Eastern ideal of the female archetype combined with the

recognition that women have a right to control their own bodies and individual self-determination. Fathers realize they have to follow their wives' points of view, in which daughters are individuals whose personal happiness takes precedence over perceptions of a family's reputation. Some mothers realize their daughter's happiness is more important than an antiquated ideology of how women should behave.

Issues of shame become resolved by enlarging the behavioral envelope in which women can act and retain honor. Fathers realize that daughters pursuing education and dating are not violating issues of honor and shame. Issues of endogamy reach a point of resolution when Christian Arab Canadian parents come to the realization that it is not what their children desire and that demographics in Canada necessitate exogamous unions. Issues of control reach resolution through a process of three stages for the father: a denial stage which does not allow for any possibility that he is not in control; a resistance phase in which there is nothing he can do to stop change, and an acceptance phase when he must give his daughter autonomy. The resolution of all four issues, although separate in themselves, more often than not occur in combination. Moreover, responses to and the resolution of each of these issues at the core of the 'courtship crisis' takes a consistent form.

THE FROZEN MINDSET

Many Christian Arab Canadian families who immigrated to Canada brought with them their traditional beliefs and practices which they used as a guideline and standard of conduct for childrearing and to live their lives in Canada. However, in the process of doing so, many entered a 'frozen mindset'.

This frozen mindset consists of the belief that few or no cultural changes have been, or are, occurring in the old country since respondents immigrated to Canada. This perception of immobility specifically refers to beliefs and behavioral practices surrounding courtship, marriage and sexuality; honor and shame; the patriarchal family structure; and gender definition and roles, in particular those concerning females. This was found to be a common perspective among all first generation respondents, before having made a return trip to the 'old country', and still to be found among many first generation respondents who have never returned to the 'old country'.

In taking a trip to the old country with the expectation of finding "everything just the way it was when we left", respondents were 'culture-shocked' to encounter everything had changed. It was not simply a matter of encountering

modernization in the 'old country' that creates the experience of culture-shock for respondents. Rather, it is the fact that these changes have occurred in the arena of courtship, marriage and sexual knowledge transmission, and as a consequence, effected the constructs of honor and shame and their traditional associations with regard to females.

These institutions, ideologies, and behavioral practices had been either unaltered for centuries or change has been so minute, that they were fairly reliable reference points representing and ensuring traditional continuity and connectedness. Respondents returning home to some of the more progressive Middle Eastern countries, for example, Israel and Lebanon, come 'face to face' with open dating for females; westernized dress being commonplace; changes in behavior, attitudes and beliefs about females, courtship, marriage, sexuality, honor and shame. The traditional tight grip of parental control over one's children's behavior, especially daughters, has 'loosened up'. Concerns regarding the possible shame one's daughters' behavior may produce, especially when interacting with members of the opposite sex, has diminished in importance.

> The dating surprised me. They were dating openly, going to the movies. In my day (1960's) they did not do this, many go out on the sly. They agree to meet each other in a certain city. (Today) if they are seen together, the consequences are not as bad as they would have been in my day. There would be talk, 'seen with a guy'. (Either) she continues to see him, or if she denies it, or is required to prove it wrong, or to go to the source of who started the talk, or she will be called a slut. (F3G1)

> Now in Lebanon unmarried girls who get pregnant go to a doctor and get an abortion. No one cares about *fadiha*. No one asks anything because everyone has their own problems. If the girl is pregnant and is not married, no one cares, no problem, especially if he is rich. If he does not want to marry the girl it's *halis*. If she wants to stay at her parents and raise the child, no problem. We were shocked when we went back. In the urban cities no one knows you, you can do anything, no one knows. (F6G1)

Today, in many parts of the Middle East, open dating is occurring and is no longer considered shameful. Typically, teenagers are still required to ask permission to go out together, but parents usually approve, as long as they go out in groups and stay in public places. Other couples, are free to meet and date one another in much the same fashion as in North America. Living common-law, although occurring, has not yet reached a level of public acceptability. Not only does this represent a new stage of development in the Middle Eastern institution

of courtship, but it also indicates that a transmutation of the concepts of honor and shame with respect to females is also occurring in the Middle East.

The confrontation with these cultural changes, in turn, made the respondents themselves appear antiquated to their friends and family in the old country, who had moved along with these new changes.[29] Initially, respondents experience a 'sense of shock'. Respondents tended to report experiencing a stark realization that the world continued to change yet their perception of it remained frozen in time. They had been perceptually and behaviorally static all these years in Canada, while the people back home had progressed ahead of them.

> See, we carried all the baggage from where we were living in Israel, is about thirty years ago. So they advanced and we stayed the same and we taught our kids the same thing we learned back home thirty years ago. We didn't advance anymore. We missed the transistion period and that's what we carried to our kids, taught our kids. Like we didn't let them do anything. Like if we had Arab people here and our kids are wearing shorts, we made them go put on long pants or whatever - you know, to go back again to the things you grew up with. When our kids went back home all the girls were wearing shorts. Our kids came back and said 'are you nuts or what? Like they were wearing halter tops and we were wearing sweaters. What is going on?' And when we went back home we said, 'oh, women are wearing shorts and halter tops'. We forgot to advance because that's what we remembered. But if you go back every ten years you see lots of differences. We thought, 'what the hell did we miss here'. (F2G1)

> We kept thinking of the old times until we went back home because we kept telling the girls 'you are not allowed to do this' and 'you can't do that'. We sent our daughters back home. They came back and told us we are backwards and my husband would not believe them until he went himself. He saw halter tops and shorts up to their ass and **it's really *up* their ass**. Here they don't, they wear shorts either down or on their knees you know and back home the shorter it is....**they were wearing g-strings, you know**. I thought

[29] These changes have not penetrated all Middle Eastern countries at this time. For example, today in Saudi Arabia open dating is not possible. The same trend of secret dating which was occurring back in Israel in the 1960's and 1970's, is now occurring in Saudi Arabia. Young couples who wish to 'get to know one another' have very little room in which to do so as formally recognized and approved behavior. Thus, public places such as parks, gardens and malls, are used as meeting places in which couples pretend to have met there through serendipity, when in fact it was pre-arranged. During the few minutes of contact they have (so as not to raise suspicion among watchful eyes), they touch, exchange presents and most importantly, exchange letters.

> 'where am I, backwards or something?' I am going backwards instead of frontwards. (F1G1)

In fact, some first generation respondents reported that they find Canada to be rather conservative with regard to sexual views and practices compared to Israel and Lebanon today.

> We could not believe it! We think we are in Canada so we know everything. And we go back there and they are watching sex movies like you wouldn't watch here. I could not believe it! They sit and watch with their husbands, sex movies. We thought because we were living in Canada we were more advanced. They are more advanced. Their influence comes from Europe, they are less prudish than we are. (F3G1)

This shock usually acts as a catalyst for unthawing the 'frozen mindset' Arab immigrants may be living in, in the host country. It is when fathers come to understand and accept the following facts that the frozen mindset begins its dissolution process:

- realizing that change *has* occurred in the old country
- that this traditional ideology will not work now in the context of this cultural change
- that if they try to maintain this ideological framework from which they base and reference their thought and action, they will be out of tune with others in the Arab community here in a Canadian context and out of harmony with other members of their family.

The initial experience of shock for fathers upon observing these behavioral and attitudinal changes by and towards females; the changes in parental authority; changes in attitudes and practices of courtship, marriage, sexuality, and attitudes and behavior associated with honor and shame in the old country, is followed by the experience of 'a sense of relief'. Behavior, activity and beliefs which were once considered shameful but are now viewed with general public acceptability, contributes much to alleviating anxiety fathers were experiencing in relation to their own daughters.

This in turn assists fathers in making a relatively smoother transition to acceptance of these cultural changes. Many fathers had a change of attitude and behavior regarding these issues which was almost immediate: either while

still in the old country during their visit,[30] or upon returning to Canada. These changes represent a major breakthrough in these traditional Middle Eastern ideology and practices.

Initially, both parents display a frozen mindset, however, mothers generally tended to adapt to new ideas and ways and means of doing things far sooner and more willingly,[31] than their husbands do. Moreover, many of the wives in this study made return trips to the old country many years prior to their husband's return trip. Hence their change in attitude usually preceeds their children reaching the dating years. Thus the return trip home acts as a catalyst to thawing the 'frozen mindset' and becomes a bridge making the transition to a new ideology and way of life in the Canadian context, easier.

By contrast, many of those fathers who do not have the experience of a shocking return trip to their country of origin remain rigid in their adherance to Middle Eastern cultural beliefs and traditions. This results in an conflict with other family members over the daughter's socializing, her dating -- courtship -- and over issues of marriage and sexuality.

Some fathers who have even been through the experience of a 'courtship crisis' still continue to adhere to the traditional ideological position. In such cases, no resolution occurs and the daughter becomes a stranger to the family. These cases however are rare; it is more typical for the father's frozen mindset to dissolve with the resolution of the crisis. Many such fathers respond with acceptance: either reluctantly or willingly. In either case, there is an acceptance that an ideological shift must occur and it involves disassembling traditionally held beliefs and behavioral practices concerning females, honor and shame, courtship, marriage, and sexuality, and the patriarchal family system.

Thus the resolution phase constitutes an ideological conflict which has to be broken down in the mind of the fathers before resolution occurs, and before the family can be reintegrated. The first step in the resolution process is when the ideological system starts to fragment. One factor which contributes to this fracturing process is a return trip to the old country. But even in the absence of this experience, fathers who still adhere to the frozen mindset can learn from the experiences of other families who have been through the courtship crisis and who have made an ideological change to harmonize with more contemporary times. One first generation *modern* woman referring to *traditional* families which

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[30] The first and third case study presented in chapter three illustates this immediate change fathers can have.

[31] This is contrary to Cainkar's (1994) findings in the Chicago study in which she reports Palestinian Muslim American women experience an "anti-assimilation burden" to maintain traditional cultural beliefs and patterns (86). This burden results from a sense of alienation felt by these immigrant Palestinians due to their Palestinian identity (86).

have not yet altered their ideology and behavioral expectations and practices, states:

> They are still operating from the viewpoint of the old country. They are terrified. We adapted. If you want to bring up your children the same way as back home, go back home. In Canada, 'when in Rome, do as the Romans do'. We did not go as far as the Canadians did. We instilled some of our values into the kids. Many women are not allowed to do anything, so they do worse - because all of a sudden they are free. When the girl sneaks out, she gets into more trouble than the girl who is allowed to go out. To us, the kids are counted as individuals, they are given their own space, room and freedom. None of them sneak out. The trick is to stop and listen to what they are saying, to understand what is ailing them. They rebel if they are not listened to, go to drugs, alcohol. Monitor the behavior. (F1G1)

Similar advice can be found from another family who has gone through the culture shock courtship crisis:

> Either you do as everybody else is doing or you are viewed as an outcast. In twenty years from now, Arabs will all be dating, so people will no longer be viewed as an outcast for that. (F3G1)

Other Contributing Factors to Dissolving the Frozen Mindset

Children can also become agents introducing change into the family circle thereby chipping-off pieces of the frozen mindset. Children introduce current dress styles, behavior, more trendy speech patterns, and different perspectives, basically keeping their parents 'in tune with the times'. Parents who are receptive to their children bringing change into the family home and who adapt and flow with these changes, are able to make the ideological shift in a Canadian context easier. These parents have less 'conflict and anxiety than parents who resist change.

During the 'courtship crisis' children can also act as a bridge in assisting their parents make the transition to a new ideological understanding. The father who may be experiencing distress with one daughter may receive help from another daughter or a son in reaching a new level of understanding, attitude and perspective from which to view what is occurring.

In addition, comparisons are made with other immigrant groups to ascertain their methods and means of coping with these very issues and how they have adapted. Also, interacting with non-Arab Canadians in general is another factor which contributes to the dissolution of the frozen mindset. Parents responses are changing towards the breakdown of endogamy and the Canadian norm for dating, courtship and marriage. But changes are slow.

> I think they are moving slowly, ya just slowly moving. They see other cultures, like we have a lot of Italian, Portuguese and Chinese friends, and they see the other cultures are moving and they're sitting still, you know. So I think that's another one of the factors, ya, other cultures are changing as well. So for them to sit still would be no good. (F4G2)

> Some parents are giving slack to their kids. They see others are doing it and say, 'we can't do this to our kids'. Movement is slow. You cannot just go out and drink. They will say you can go to a party but you must be home at midnight even if you are 20 years old. Before they only allowed you to go for a walk, or bicycle rides together - **for a 20 year old!** Now you can do more. You can go to a movie - but call before and after. They see other cultures doing it. They use them as a measuring stick. They do not want to stand still. Canadians are not used as a measuring stick because they are viewed as 'too exotic', 'too fascist', 'too way out there', 'too wild'. (F9G2).

CONCLUSION

In summary, it is clear that young Christian Arab Canadian women dating in Canada must go through extraordinary levels of anxiety and often extreme conflicts with their fathers. These conflicts may begin before puberty and involve threats of violence, acts of violence, restrictions on social interaction, arranged and/or early marriages to men who, in turn may try to keep the women in the same old 'box'.

There are implications for the family. Family matters are generally kept within the family. Exposing family problems is viewed as a breach of family honor. Once honor is breached, gossip and scandal (*fadiha*) can taint all family members within the Arab community. As a result, business may suffer; invitations to social gatherings and events may cease; whole families may become cut off from each other. Many family members interviewed for this study

were not speaking with each other, due to such breaches of this code of silence. This raises a question about the mechanisms of internal sanction still operating within the Christian Arab Canadian community. Dodd (1973) referring to Abu-Lughod's (1961) study in contemporary Cairo, states that she reports that "the transition from rural to urban life does not involve breaking ties with the village community, nor does it involve anonymity" (48). Ironically, in Edmonton, traditional (Christian) Arab Canadians still maintain their allegiance to family honor (*'ird)* and the modesty code despite the fact they are thousands of miles away from the Middle East which gave rise to it.

The preceding raises a question of whether these ideologies continue to fulfill important functions in a new environment. It well may be that the concepts of honor (*'ird*) and shame constitute not only a behavioral code but also a framework for establishing cultural institutions important to adaptation in new environments. The fact that business and social relationships within the Arab community are strongly influenced by reputation might be of critical importance to understanding the persistence of these ideologies.

CHAPTER FIVE

EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

The focus of this chapter is sexual knowledge transmission in areas specifically related to reproduction, social and sexual interaction between the sexes, and the transmission of values, beliefs and expected codes of behavior in this area.

Both school and non-school-based sources of information may be transmitted either formally or informally. Formal transmission of sexual knowledge refers to a structured instructional process implying a degree of planning or intent and organization, for example, as found in schools, in families, or in religious institutions. Informal knowledge transmission refers to an unstructured transmission of sexual knowledge. Examples are: information transmitted among peers, through the entertainment and other technological media, interactions between students and counselors, and information transmission occurring within casual conversations in either school or non-school based environments or in the Arab-Canadian family or community.

Greater understanding of these influences and their effect upon the (Christian) Arab Canadian parent-child relationship might better inform education and curriculum development. This is especially true in the controversial area of sex education as taught in schools; incorporating new content may be of help to alleviate occurrences of cultural conflicts between parent and child, between children within the school context, and between ethnic or cultural groups in the larger society. For instance, some of the insights gleaned from the courtship related conflict in the (Christian) Arab Canadian community might be extended to other immigrant parents and children experiencing similar conflicts.

Historical Context for the Formal and Informal Transmission of Sex Education

As discussed in chapter two, historically in the Middle East there was no formal sexual knowledge transmission. First generation respondents received sexual knowledge through informal modes of transmission. How, to whom, and what information was conveyed, was dependent upon one's gender and marital

status. Typically, there was no transmission of sexual knowledge from parent to child prior to the marriage of the child.

Among *unmarried females*, very few sources of sexual information transmission were available in a Middle Eastern context – excluding personal experience which was considered a shameful form of obtaining sexual knowledge. The wedding shower given for a bride-to-be was the only informally sanctioned source of transmission for sexual knowledge. Information with regard to menstruation was, in some cases, transmitted from elder sisters or older friends to younger sisters and girls. Another form of sexual knowledge transmission available to unmarried females was circumstantial – being in the right place at the right time. In this case young unmarried females may inadvertently or perhaps in some cases secretly overhear conversations regarding sexuality (usually between married women); or being from a poor family with little privacy being provided for individuals, an unmarried individual (male or female) may find themselves present in the same room when their parents were engaging in sexual intercourse. Given these limited sources of obtaining sexual knowledge, most females entered marriage in a state of naiveté and ignorance. One respondent reporting on the typical means of obtaining sexual knowledge during more traditional times, states:

> Long time ago people could not read and write so that was not a source of information available to them. Education came after the fact – after you were married. Some would look, she would hear them **'oh, is that it!**[1] It's done and over with'. (F1G1)

Traditionally for *unmarried males* the situation was not much different than unmarried females. Respondents related three typical scenarios which could be found: either they entered marriage lacking knowledge and physical experience; or they gathered information from peers (usually misinformation) and from overhearing conversations by other males. Some young men went to prostitutes in nearby towns, or engaged in sexual experiences with other reportedly non-Arab women. Some unmarried males (and females) obtained information through books on biological and reproductive information. These books were usually read without parental knowledge. One male respondent reporting on how he acquired information with regard to sexuality reports:

> Through books, reading books, mainly through talking with friends. You won't get it from the parents, we didn't get it. Not through the school, there was no sex education (M2G1)

[1] The reference here is to having experienced sexual intercourse for the first time after becoming married and realizing this was the knowledge previously hidden from them.

Married men typically did not discuss sexuality (the topic being considered personal and uncomfortable) or when it was discussed, it was usually with one's wife in private.

During their "coffee sessions" while visiting with one another, *married women* often engaged in conversations which turned to the topic of sexuality and reproduction. Sexual teasing and joking were commonplace as well as more serious discussions of sexual knowledge. For example, conversations often centered around topics of how to cope with gynecological problems such as alleviating menstrual pain, contraceptive usage and problems, discussing the sexual act itself, infertility, performing abortions, et cetera. These 'coffee sessions' functioned as a medium in which an information network for *women* was created that provided transmission of sexual knowledge. Even today in Canada, especially among women who either do not work outside the home or who spend a great deal of time in the home, 'coffee sessions' among women during visiting still functions to transmit sexual information, as well as provide an emotional support network.

Thus, historically speaking, the formal and informal transmission of sexual knowledge was limited due to the value placed on purity and innocence (ignorance) owing to the Madonna archetype. This was perpetuated by an ideology where it was honorable to be naive and shameful to be knowledgeable about sex. There was no room for an uninhibited expression of sexuality, even within the context of marriage. Persistence of these traditional ideologies in the Middle East kept formal education from addressing these issues at the curriculum level; thus further perpetuating sexual ignorance from generation to generation.

> Traditionally they[2] never had[3] because they have never been talked to about this[4] before and they thought of it as something that is a 'no no'. It's an old tradition that they carry on and carry on, and they thought 'ok their children will know this the same way that we know it'. And that's the kind of tradition. They carry on the tradition from one generation to another. (M3G1)

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[2] Children of previous generations.

[3] Sexual knowledge prior to marriage.

[4] Sexuality.

Formal Transmission of Sex Education in a Contemporary Canadian Context

Given this historical background it is not surprising that Christian Arab Canadian respondents in this study reported little or no formal transmission of sexual knowledge between parents and children.[5] Furthermore, there was very little interaction with formal religious[6] institutions, (churches) therefore the role which religious institutions played in the transmission of sexual knowledge for the respondents in this study was nil. In this thesis, formal transmission of sexual knowledge specifically refers to information received through the educational system and through the deliberate instruction by parents.

In general first generation parents stated they had no desire to discuss issues related to sexuality with their children. The topic and related areas are experienced as uncomfortable and they reported feeling they did not know how to approach discussion of the subject matter. Based on these feelings, many parents stated that once they received a note from the school asking for permission to teach their child(ren) sex education, it relived them of the pressure they reported feeling with regard to having any dialogue in this area with their children. They expressed feeling a 'sense of relief' that they "did not have to" or that "there is no need to talk to my children about sex, the school will do it" because of the following underlying assumption they held.

First generation parents assumed that sex education courses in Canadian school systems were comprehensive in terms of biological and reproductive content to the exclusion of all other elements of human sexuality. Specifically, courses were believed to contain content knowledge regarding menstruation, pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, and by consequence, contraceptive usage. One parent reporting her view of what sex education in the school system consisted of, states:

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[5] There were messages with regard to sexuality that were transmitted within the home environment, however. These will be discussed under the section of 'The Big Tabu'.

[6] Within this sample population both first and second generation respondents reported religion to be important to them in a "private and personal" way. All respondents reported they do not attend church. A commonly held view with regard to church was that it was a social institution rather than a religious institution. For example, people attended church to "see who was wearing the most fashionable clothes and to catch up on the gossip". The general belief is that there is "no need" to go to church. Religion is generally not used as a foundation upon which to base decision-making. In general then, religion played a minimal role, if any, with regard to transmitting sexual knowledge. Only one respondent in this sample population, a post-secondary educated unmarried first generation male in his late thirties, used religion as a basis for his decision-making and behavior.

> It is like taking a biology and body function and reproductive course. It was all normal and there was nothing shameful about it. It was good to know. (F6G1)

Another parent, upon viewing a film on the reproductive cycle at her daughter's school, states:

> I went to one of these sessions where they showed a film of the reproductive cycle. I think it was a good idea. I wished they had that when we were growing up. It's good because the kids do not go to friends for information and receive wrong information. It was nicely displayed, it helps. Its better for the kids, better than depend on friends. (F2G1)

Some *traditional* families hold views that schools should discuss only negative aspects of sexuality and not present the positive qualities because these would encourage children to become sexually active, as one parent states:

> We do not believe in sex education being taught at school. Schools should teach our children about diseases and the harmful aspects of sexuality, whereas the parents should teach the good about sex. Schools should teach the bad about sex because if the school teaches the good about sex the child would want to go out and do it. (F3G2)

Dodd (1973) also found this a concern because the school is a non-family organization: family honor was not its concern and therefore unable to protect the honor of daughters (53). This is one reason why teenage daughters are subject to increased restrictions of the modesty code and more closely supervised by family members. Although positive responses with regard to sex education in school systems were indicated, similar parental concerns were found in this study. The main concern is that curricular content may conflict with the cultural ideology of honor and shame. Parents do not want schools informing children of ideas which may run contrary to traditional belief systems,[7] nor to

[7] Kocturk (1992) citing Yazgan (1983) who conducted a study on Turkish girls in Sweden reports Muslim Turkish immigrants in Sweden sometimes complain to schools with regard to the sex education curriculum. "Teachers are asked not to allow mixed-gender children groups to sit together. The pressure is mostly on girls. Their participation in certain activities, such as gymnastics, swimming and dancing may be banned by their families. Even though families do not presuure the girls to cover their hair, they are required to wear 'decent', unsuggestive clothes, and to come directly home from school. Few girls are allowed to go anywhere with their friends after dark" (108). Barclay, (1976) in his study of 20 Lebanese Muslim men in Lac la Biche, Alberta, found they opposed sex education on the basis that they felt this was an infringement on their family rights and privacy (103).

provide opportunities to create family dishonor. In general most parents believed that receiving sex education through the school was a positive experience because it presented facts and eliminated misinformation received from talking with peers.

> Sex education is good in schools. Why should you learn it the hard way, the crooked way or inexperienced way? Make it natural from grade five because this is life and when you make it natural it is less harmful. If we had started doing this long time ago all over, become natural, we won't see this that we are seeing now. At university we did not have that. (M2G1)

> Many girls are told wrong information by friends. You can't fall with your eyes open because you see where you are going. So if they open the kids eyes early enough to know right from wrong, they won't fall. They won't get into trouble. (F3G1)

All parents in this sample held the attitude that if their children were informed with the biological and reproductive aspects of sexuality, they were then well-informed with regard to all aspects of sexuality. As a result of this belief, parents saw no need to supplement or discuss this topic with children. Moreover, parents also believed that once their children received sex education through the school system they had no need to go outside the formal school system for further information. This was wishful thinking on the part of parents however; in reality second generation respondents who experienced sex education courses conveyed an entirely different picture.

Second generation respondents reported that CALM[8] courses,[9] are taught at the junior high school level in grades 7,8 and 9. Course content varies depending upon the grade of students. At the high school level, respondents reported they were required to take only one CALM course at some point during the three years at high school. According to second generation respondents, the majority of their CALM course focused upon "life skills for coping in the real world", for example, "how to get an apartment on your own and survive".

It was reported that a time period of one week was dedicated to the discussion of sexuality. Within that week the majority of content focused on biological and reproductive aspects of sexuality. For example, one eighteen year old respondent reported that his high school course on sexuality consisted of viewing a film on the human birth process and slides of sexually transmitted

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[8] Career and Life Management.

[9] The general course title used for providing instruction in sex education.

diseases. Various methods of birth control were discussed, condoms and diaphragms were passed around the class for students to view. Three young teenagers who had been pregnant, of which two had abortions, came to the classroom to discuss their personal choices in this regard. Much of the sex information concerned prevention of pregnancy, sexual diseases, and the consequences of carelessness. As chapter three has shown, the vast majority of the young people in this study have been sexually active for several years by the time formal sex education is provided by schools.

One respondent stated that "how to cope with one's feelings" was addressed in his high school class one day. "At the end of the class the teacher handed out a worksheet and students were told that they could read the material if they wanted to". Another respondent referring to her experience of formal sex education as taught in school reports:

> They tried to prepare you, but I mean obviously they couldn't put their finger on the emotional part of it you know, because you think you can handle it. And I don't think they stressed enough how serious it was, because **I mean it was a big deal.** (F1G2)

A third respondent reports, "there was no discussion of homosexuality, no cultural aspects were considered at all."

Second generation respondents typically reported that CALM courses neglected emotional, psychological, cross cultural, and societal aspects of sexuality. There was no discussion of dating; interaction within dating relationships and the myriad of feelings experienced; cross-cultural courtship patterns, different cultural codes of behavior and religious factors which influence these; nor conflicts which arise in these areas. There was very little, if any, discussion concerning interaction with members of the opposite sex, media pressure, conflicts with parental or societal expectations, nor conflict arising in these areas.

Many second generation respondents reported a common impression that "sex was conveyed as a negative activity which was not natural and there was something wrong with it". Some second generation male respondents reported the course material was sufficient; but a majority reported it was "insufficient, cold and clinical in its approach and deliverance." No coping strategies were provided.

Given the brief attention directed to sexuality within CALM courses and the fact a majority of attention was given to biological and reproductive aspects of sexuality, it was not surprising to find a general consensus by all second generation respondents that the majority of their learning about sexuality did not

come through the formal school system, but rather through informal learning. In addition, given the age at which these young people become sexually active, the formal system is, like the traditionally informal system, a case of information received "after the fact".

The Big Tabu: Non-School Based Formal Transmission

Traditionally, sex was not discussed among family members. Such discussions were 'tabu'.[10] In the Canadian context some first generation respondents claimed they discussed sexuality with their children. However, all second generation respondents reported that their parents did *not* discuss sexuality with them. Menstruation was discussed between some mothers and daughters, only after the subject was brought up at school. Typically, menstruation, feelings, dating relationships, contraceptive usage, sexually transmitted diseases, the sexual act, pregnancy, abortion, infertility, are not discussed between parent and child. What is being transmitted by parents to children with regard to sexuality? Traditional Middle Eastern tabus surrounding the discussion of sexuality are the main message conveyed by formal parent-child communications. This tabu is extremely powerful. Most parents reported feeling uncomfortable and ill equipped to discuss sexuality with their children, even adult children. Likewise, second generation young respondents reported they felt they could not approach their parents to discuss sexuality. One respondent referring to why she felt she could not approach her mother to discuss sexuality, relates her mother's response when she confessed to having kissed her fiancée while engaged:

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[10] The term tabu refers to prohibitions of certain behaviors, contacts, foods, objects, thoughts and words due to negative attributes associated with these. Tabus usually refer to objects, persons or places. Ember (1990) reports "...taboo things are not to be touched, for their power can cause harm. Thus those who touch them may themselves become taboo. Taboos surround food not to be eaten, places not to be entered, animals not to be killed, people not to be touched sexually, people not to be touched at all, and so on" (283). That which is considered tabu is usually condemned as being 'not proper because of convention'. Often the violation of a 'tabu' is thought to result in negative supernatural effects as well as social sanctions. Sexual intercourse by unmarried women is, for example, one extreme negative prohibition imposed by a traditional Middle Eastern cultural ideology on females. The violation of this tabu is tainted *'ird*, dishonoring of the entire family and the host of consequences suffered as a result.

> My mom is even more naive than a 12 year old girl. So she never talked about sexuality. An example of this is like when I told her me and Faris kissed when we were engaged. **'How could you kiss him!' She was shocked!** She did not understand that you could kiss when you are engaged. (F3G2)

One reason for the typical lack of dialogue between mother and daughter with regard to sexual knowledge is the traditional girl-woman classificatory system which still manifests itself today in a Canadian context. The irony is that among some *modern* families there is an unspoken awareness of the sexual activity that one's teenage and young adult daughter's are engaging in, yet because of the traditional ideology surrounding the Madonna archetype and its connection to the honor and shame ideologies, in combination with the fear that the consequences of *fadiha* could create, there is no room to acknowledge this behavior. Because of the tabu no discussion of sexuality can occur. There is a glimmer of hope in that 'dating' is discussed in a general way. Dialogue among *modern* mothers and unmarried adult daughters with regard to dating experiences and feelings, is beginning to become a more frequent occurrence.

In general, sons are granted more freedom than daughters. When sons are dating however, they come into conflict over expectations of endogamy and their fathers' expectations of absolute adherence to traditional authority over their sons behavior. The 'Big Tabu' extends to the father-son dyad as well. Discussions between fathers and sons with regard to sexuality was generally non-existent although it is beginning to open up with regard to dating interaction.

Second generation respondents reported they understood why parents cited "vague traditional reasons"[11] to them to justify a continuation of a behavior or belief system, and that they also realize how antiquated these justifications may be. For example, parents tend to provide cultural reasons[12] (not religious) to their children (especially daughters) for why they usually cannot engage in a particular activity: such as, "because we are Arabs" or "what will your uncles think" "what will everyone say if they saw?" "what will everyone say if they knew?" These reasons were accepted and not questioned in a Middle Eastern context where the concept of banking education has existed between parent and child for generations. In a Canadian context, and with the different climate of the times we live in now, these justifications simply do not hold up any longer.

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[11] Kocturk (1992) reports similar complaints by second generation adult Muslim Turkish immigrants in Sweden (108).

[12] Cainkar (1987) reports that Muslim Palestinian American parents' explanations were "coined in terms of being Arab, sometimes Muslim" (147).

> Traditionally the girl did not argue with her parents. In Canada, because we go to school and see what the other Canadians and other Arabs get to do, then there is conflict in the home. There is a 'scene' you know, 'why can't I get to do it, what's wrong?'. In an Arab country you would not see that. (F3G1)

Often, when children try to please parents and fit in with parental expectations, conflict then may occur between the children and their peers. No matter what they do, these young people will find themselves in conflict with someone important to them.

The 'courtship crisis' forces parents and children to break the 'Big Tabu'. Children force parents to confront tabus directly through misbehavior, sometimes to the extent where they are arrested and must be bailed out of jail. In this study it was found that children sometimes threatened that unless issues were brought into the open -- especially with regard to dating and sexual freedom -- they would continue to misbehave. In a sense, the more liberal legislative and moral climate in Canada is used by young people to gain freedoms. The fact that in Canada civil authorities do not consider dating behavior or even consensual sex between teenagers as criminal, means that the Middle Eastern tabu is not supported in this new context. This means parents who keep their children ignorant or pretend their children are non-sexual are seen as unrealistic and are criticized by members of the larger society. This comes as a shock to these parents and it may bring them to the point where they begin to question the validity of sexual tabus.

In summary, then, formal influences which second generation respondents are exposed to provide very little if any, information. The general tone of information offered is perceived as "cold and clinical" or as negative: -- "sex is tabu". It is fairly obvious why young people go outside the formal sector (both parents and school) to seek and find sources of knowledge and information with respect to sexuality.

INFORMAL TRANSMISSION OF SEXUAL KNOWLEDGE

In this study it became clear that it is still the informal sector which provides the vast majority of sexual knowledge. This informal transmission of sexual knowledge, both school and non-school based, has an enormous influence upon second generation respondents (in fact upon all youth).

Following is a breakdown of the various kinds of informal sources of sexual knowledge.

The Traditional Community (Peers)

Among first generation and many *traditional* second generation respondents, peers usually consist of members within one's extended family, members within the Arab community and occasionally non-Arab friends. Although there may be bonding within the work environment with co-workers, generally speaking there is no discussion of personal matters occurring within the home, nor situations referring to courtship, marriage, sexuality and conflict in these areas. Peers can function as a support and counsel network; for example, when a father consults other Arab men in the community with regard to intermarriage for his daughter or son; or when a wife has female friends and family members over for coffee and desired information is exchanged.

This network of peers also has a restrictive influence over individuals. In general when in the company of peers, individuals tend to keep a watchful eye on others with regard to maintaining traditionally expected codes of behavior and beliefs; more so as one goes outward from the immediate family. For example, sisters will give each other more leeway when pronouncing judgments on each other's behavior than might be given to a cousin. Cousins are given more leeway than non-related Arabs; other Arabs are given more leeway than non-Arabs.

A concern with *fadiha* is still a major reference point in many day-to-day activities, especially among *traditional* households. It plays a significant role in influencing behavior and belief systems about sexuality and expected female codes of behavior. The Arab community has an inhibiting influence on sexuality which is still effective among *traditional* households, although its influence is waning among *modern* households. Moreover,a trend is emerging among *modern second generation* respondents, in that attempts are made to 'distance' oneself from community contact and influence. Hence the influence of the Arab community is becoming less effective.

The Contemporary Community (Peers)

Among *modern* second generation respondents, peers consist of Arab and non-Arab fellow students, co-workers and friends. The influence of non-Arab peers is more extensive here than it is for the previous category of respondents. Second generation respondents reported learning the majority of their sexual knowledge through peers and personal experience:

> What I learned, I learned from my friends. I did not learn anything from that sort of clinical cold approach they take in the classroom. Anything I learned, I learned from my friends. (M4G2)

> The only thing I learned is what I overheard. You know you talk to your friends about things like that. In the family, no. (M2G2)

> From my friends what I got the most is that sex is not tabu. I think that is what I got from the school ... that sex is tabu...not it was natural, it could be fun, you could make jokes about it and it was ok. And that was something comforting to know because no one wants to think that they're perverse or anything like that. (F12G2)

The school system is more than just a vehicle for the formal presentation of knowledge. The school system is a social milieu in which students spend their time and learn behavioral codes that clash with parental expectations, Middle Eastern ideology, and the formal school system's presentation of sexuality. The school system as a social milieu makes a tremendous impact on the ways a culture changes. It is a social environment that has its own rules - rules of the dominant culture. These rules are imposed on students by peers, media and culture. One respondent reporting on the conflict which occurs when the informal school milieu clashes with formal tradition as presented in the family home, states:

> You are exposed to so much else. You see different ways of doing things. Education interferes with a number of things: dating, wearing make-up, the clothing, you know running around wearing tight jeans and a sweater, that sort of thing, and it caused alot of conflict. (F1G2)

Sexual activity taking place among teenagers and young adults may not be acknowledged by parents even when they know or suspect it is going on because of the traditional tabu on sex. As a result, among youths and young adults sexual knowledge and activities have become ritualized, as if in a secret society.[13] Adherence to a peer-based secret society creates abnormally high

[13] Secret societies are well known in the anthropological literature. They "include groups that restrict their membership and maintain secrecy about their rituals, group practices, and special esoteric knowledge" (Spradley, James and McCurdy, David 1989:129). They can be characterized by initiation ceremonies, oaths of loyalty, rituals of membership, recognition codes, ostracization of members who break codes or reveal secret knowledge, et cetera.

levels of loyalty and bonding between members and discretion before outsiders. The researcher was careful to switch codes when speaking with teenagers and young adults in order to appear less threatening and elicit more confidential levels of information.

It is anthropologically interesting that parents and teachers are unaware that this is occurring. Both parents and teachers are viewed as outsiders to the clique and not trusted with information that can be damaging to other teenagers. This is why a parent does not learn that their daughter is sexually active until long after her friends.

Children are not as naive today regarding sexual knowledge as previous generations. There are more sources of information available and access is relatively easy. These sources provide a wide range of perspectives and ideologies which an individual can utilize to base decision-making upon.

Media and Mobility: Technologies of Contact

> When I married I didn't know anything about sexual diseases. Most times when we go to the doctor's office we take all the pamphlets and we read every one of them. Or, if we see an article in magazines about diseases, **'oh! so that's what you do'.** (F1G1)

This quote is from an interview with a first generation immigrant. When the family left their country of origin communication with relatives and friends in the home country was more limited than it is today. Today, first generation immigrants have greater access to news and gossip from friends and relations left behind. This was reported by Abu Laban:

> Today's immigrant can make a quick plane trip or telephone call, use video cassettes, records and movies; all offer the opportunity for real or symbolic return to the country of birth, closer ties with relatives there, and reinforcement of community norms and religious practices....Frequency of contact often links new immigrants with the gossip network in the homeland; this can be a potent form of social control. (55) [14]

[14] Abu Laban was referring here predominantly to more recent (1968 and onwards) immigrants. This seemed to be most salient to the cohort in this present study who immigrated from 1962 onwards.

Children of immigrants are influenced in two directions by modern technologies of information transmission and interpersonal contact. One direction they may go is closer to their parents, sharing with them a world view since a community is not isolated from its counterpart in the old world. This is similar to what Abu Laban (1989) reports:

> The second generation shares in the two-world life of its parents. Ancestral religion, customs, and language are more likely to receive community reinforcement. Ethnoreligious peers are more easily available for children, men and women. The second generation participates in returns to the old country, both symbolic and real....Opprtunities for cultural retention are higher for this second generation than for second-generation descendents of the early pioneers.[15] Parental power in arranging marriages is likely to remain viable longer for this group, although more so for daughters than for sons. However, given the assertion and power of Islamic pride, sons are likely to feel more pressure than in the past to marry a Muslim. This may be reflected in an increase in the endogamous marriages of males, or at least, toward outmarriage *contingent upon* the conversion of the wife to Islam. For this second generation...their understanding of ethnic distinctiveness, the Arab world, and Islam is more likely to be comforting, familial, and familiar. Under these conditions, attacks by outsiders are more likely to invoke an *increase* in unity - not a division between the generations but a closing of the ranks, a shared personal experience which further contributes to a sense of ethnic solidarity. (1989:56-57)

In the second direction they may go further from their parents. In addition to travel, the diversity of sources of knowledge transmission available through the media (music, television, videos, radio, movies, computers - especially the internet) expose second generation youths and young adults to numerous perspectives with regard to relationships, dating, marriage, and sexual behavior. This can create a greater generational rift between parents and their children. Typically, first generation respondents utilize the above mentioned sources of information transmission far less than second generation respondents do. For example, most first generation respondents listen to Arab music as opposed to western music. Some lyrics in western music project messages related to sexual behavior and attitudes. This is not an area which first generation respondents are generally exposed to or influenced by, however their children are. Although first generation respondents do watch television, there is a tendency for some *traditional* husbands to monitor television viewing by one's wife and children. For first generation respondents, watching videos, or viewing movies at a theater

[15] Immigrants who came to America between the 19th century and WW2.

were activities that were not engaged in frequently compared to second generation respondents. Most first generation respondents are computer illiterate, thus the internet was not a source of information utilized by them. Among second generation respondents however, the above mentioned sources of information transmission were frequently employed.

As a result of exposure to and utilization of sources of information presented through various forms of technological communications, second generation respondents obtain a broader base of knowledge from which to base their decision-making, than their parents. Moreover, as a result of rapid advances made in communications on a worldwide basis, the manners and methods of socializing and interacting among people are changing. This is especially obvious in the area of socializing, dating and marriage as is occurring on the internet.

There are on-line newsgroups that offer opportunities for open dialogue on almost any topic, with new topics emerging daily. Engaging in dialogue and acquiring information on relationships, romance, dating, marriage, sexuality, and on the cross-cultural aspects of these topics are easily attainable on the internet.

E-mail and the WWW (world wide web) have transformed long distant communication and is influencing and changing traditional forms of courtship worldwide. Romance, dating and marriage are developing within a new technological framework. Where people tended to place personal ads in local newspapers looking for prospective mates, these ads are now submitted to websites or on homepages and then viewed worldwide. Access to the pool of prospective mates has increased dramatically. 'Internet Relay Chat' (IRC), an on-line forum for people to meet and talk to one another in real-time, is another medium which is becoming popular for social interaction. Geographic distance between people is no longer a factor.

As a result of the rapid technological advancements the entire structure of socialization and dating are being revolutionized. Consequently, many second generation respondents who have gained a broader base of knowledge and understanding reject traditional ideology that parents maintain. Given the speed of change and the effect on people's lives, holding to a rigid mindset that resists new and different perspectives and ways of doing things – even within the very personal and controversial arena of dating, marriage and sexuality – is unrealizable.

As a result of media and communication technologies in today's learning contexts, it is no wonder that second generation immigrants are computer literate and find themselves attracted to "Western" concepts of dating, marriage, and female ideals. A wealth of new ideas are readily at hand and can be easily obtained and exchanged. The school uses this media for communication and

social networks whereas parents normally do not. Some parents and children remained locked in tradition, but the majority voluntarily exposes itself to more and more intercultural interaction.

In summary then, the Arab community is divided along generational lines into a first generation community of peers (although this includes *traditional* second generation) and a second generation community of peers. The first generation community of peers is distinguished along religious and ethnic lines from other Canadians, and also by their adherence to the 'tabu' regarding sexuality, the Madonna archetype, the extreme control over female behavior (the box), and a patriarchal authority structure. The second generation is a community of peers which may not be limited in all cases to certain ethnic groups, that is, it may include non-Arabs; and it is characterized in general by a rejection of traditional Middle Eastern ideology, and behavior. This community takes on some aspects of a secret society with regard to shared knowledge and behavior due to an awareness of potential conflict with the behavioral codes and values of the first generation community.

Both communities are exposed to informal knowledge systems regarding sex (through the media, books, television, et cetera) but rarely acknowledge the mutuality of the experience. This may be in part because of the tabu on sex and the limitations on implied gender roles. The lack of communication between these two communities is in no way bridged by any formal systems of transmission of knowledge in Canadian schools, counselling services, or other agencies.

Messages about sexuality transmitted through the formal sector tend to have a negative connotation attached to them, whereas the informal sector regards the same behavior as positive[18] and acceptable. For example, messages transmitted within a typical *traditional* (Christian) Arab Canadian home with regard to what is considered appropriate behavior for a female, (such as, not wearing a short skirt, socializing with males or dating) conflict with messages transmitted by peers, by media and by North American culture. Teenagers experience difficulty reconciling these conflicting messages offered to them when many of one's girlfriends show up at school wearing short skirts and gossiping about their dating experiences, and parents label such behavior and activity as "unacceptable" and "shameful". They may wonder does this mean all female teenagers in Canada who are wearing short skirts and are dating are 'fallen women', corresponding to the whore archetype?

The formal school curriculum views messages of the informal sector about courtship and sexuality as 'too sensitive and controversial to touch'. Thus far,

[18] This does not imply the informal sector of knowledge transmission does not send out messages which can be negative with regard to sexuality; clearly it can, as is obvious in the case of child pornography.

formal education information has chosen a minimalist approach in the knowledge and information offered with regard to these issues; hence the emphasis on the biological and reproductive aspects of sexuality. For example, there may be very little discussion in formal classes about the fact that courtship and marital patterns vary from culture to culture, or about religious factors which influence cultural patterns, or about conflict which arises at the family, community and/or societal level - even when all of these realities are experienced by students in the class.

Sex education is one of the most sensitive cultural issues in the formal educational system. But is the current approach really benefiting students? Waiting until young people are at higher educational levels before addressing concrete aspects of sexuality is too late in many cases. How many young Arab women accept arranged marriages upon completion of high school? How many young men feel obligated to return to the 'old country' to find and marry an Arab girl, when they would rather not? How many youths drop out of school because they feel they have only two choices: either following their parents traditional expectations or running away from home? How much pain is still occurring as a result of ignorance? When will the school system adopt a more enlightened and comprehensive information system with regard to formal teaching of life issues?

Not only are students failing to benefit from the limited course content, but in combination with this fact is a minimal time framework in which instruction on these topics is conducted, sexuality is a small subsection of the 'Career and Life Management' course. Clearly, there is simply no room to even consider addressing any aspects of sexuality which are not grounded in a biological basis. Until the educational system addresses male-female relationships (psychologically, culturally, religiously, societally, and sexually) Canadian youth will find the informal sector the only avenue available to turn to for answers.

In order to address these issues, discussion of sex, love relationships, and conflict in these areas must be brought out into the open. The tabu must be challenged and the fact that not all cultures teach these tabus, nor adhere to the same archetypes must be addressed. Canada is a multicultural society which should be pioneering formal systems of addressing these issues.

THE VALUE OF EDUCATION: CULTURAL CHANGES

Traditionally most Arabs were not educated formally and so education was not used as a measuring stick of status and honor. However in Canadian society, as one respondent reports, "the opportunity to be educated is equally available to all, so they are taking it". As a result, among the Arab Canadian

community this is rapidly becoming one of the new emerging criteria for assessing 'honor and status'. Among second generation respondents in this study, there is a trend towards post-secondary education. Forty per cent of respondents in this study were either currently obtaining or already had obtained post secondary education. Even first generation women who never had opportunities to go to university in the 'old country', and whose children were now grown up, expressed desire to go to university now.

As a result of this new educational trend, criteria in mate-selection is being altered. It is typical now that a mate who is "highly educated" is desired. Even those who have only high-school education, are seeking mates with post-secondary education. For females, this implies greater freedom for them after marriage. For males, it is a status symbol to have a highly educated wife. Traditional fathers seeking for their daughters who are currently in post secondary educational institutions, potential mates in the old country, are pleased to discover her value has increased even in the Middle East. Further, the status of her prospective husband has increased because of her educational accomplishments. Within this newly emerging value on education as a criteria in mate selection, a hierarchy is forming. As one respondent reports, "everyone here had equal opportunity to get educated, those who make the most of their opportunities will rank the highest".

Dodd (1973) noted that education affects the *'ird* code "by equipping women with the skills needed for employment outside the home" (54). This may be why both *traditional* and *modern* husbands frequently opposed their wives acquiring any further education, although they may support the education of their daughters.

> Education is out! She is not allowed to go to school because there are men there. Whites are there which will influence her to do things and want things which are not traditional. And I could not see what she is doing at school. (M10G1)

> There is no need for it. She just has to take care of the house and the kids. (M9G1)

> What is she going to do with the kids if she goes to school? (M2G1)

> If my wife wants to get more education it is ok to do it before we start having children. Family comes first, and children comes first. (M3G1)

> After marriage I was not allowed to go to school for further education, not allowed to work, not allowed to go to church.[17] I had to just stay home and have children and stay in the home, keep house and watch the kids. We have big arguments over the children taking any lessons. My husband does not talk to me on the days when our children have lessons. (F3G2)

For the wife who does return to school to acquire higher education, this creates a shift of traditional roles within the family home. Among one extended family in which the wife's brothers also resided, the wife returned to school for upgrading, to improve her English and because her husband was unemployed. Interestingly, the husband took over some of her roles within the home. One would have expected the husband (a very traditional man) to oppose his wife returning to school, or any shift which resulted in the roles within the family home. However, the husband opposed neither of these changes. Ironically, it was the woman's brother who opposed her being in school on the basis that she was married and had children and that 'these' were her priorities, not acquiring higher education. He further added that it was "wrong" that her husband was now performing domestic duties which were considered "women's work".

This is not just an issue in Canada, but in other immigration communities living in North America. Henderson's study of 20 Iranian students at the State University of New York at Buffalo revealed that even though females acquired higher levels of education, entered the labour pool, and progressed in their legal position, they still were not emancipated from traditional domestic roles (1979).

The issues raised here also extend to immigrant communities beyond a North American context. Kocturk (1992), who conducted a study of Muslim Turkish immigrants in Europe, states that although change is occurring in many areas, "the primacy of wife and mothers role, the sexual behavior norms of women and the honour ethic remain unquestioned" (99). [18]

Dodd (1973), suggested that the education of women has long term effects; it is reflected in the attitudes of their sons in the next generation (53). Even in Egypt "the sons of educated mothers tend to favor women's emancipation, whereas the sons of illiterate mothers tend to oppose it" (53-54). It has been noted that *post-secondary* education is being pursued by about 40% of the population sample in this study. This is a small study but it has implications for other ethnic groups in a multicultural Canada. The attitudes and experiences

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[17] This woman never attended church prior to marriage, but stated she had the desire to go to church for social reasons, not religious reasons.

[18] She also cites Mortensen (1990); Merdol (1982); Davis and Heyl (1986); as reporting the same findings (99).

reported here are shared by other ethnic immigrant groups. The implications are shared as well.

It was twenty years ago that Danziger (1976) conducted a study of hundreds[19] of immigrant Italian school children in the Toronto area and reported:

> The maintenance of traditional family patterns provides an institutional defence against the manifold anxieties produced by cultural transplantation. The migrant has little choice but to adapt to the demands of the new society in the extrafamilial sphere. But the feelings of insecurity which necessarily accompany this period of adaptation strengthen his resolve to maintain the family as a bastion of stability in a world that is difficult to understand. The unmarried adolescent girl constitutes at the same time the crucial and the most vulnerable link in the maintenance of this stabiltiy. Hence she is apt to be rather fiercely protected from the winds of change. The realization that her emancipation is necessary for the final steps in the emancipation of the ethnic group as a whole can only be expected to gain ground slowly and hesitantly. (212)

The unmarried adolescent girl is now bringing about the emancipation for not only herself and her sisters, but also for her brothers.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose for this study was to determine how the content of expected codes of behavior, beliefs and values with regard to courtship, marriage and sexuality are being transmitted and changed in (Christian) Arab Canadian families in Edmonton. It was discovered that conflict is occurring among these families which mushrooms into a crisis situation during the courtship years of second generation children, hence the "courtship crisis". Two ideological constructs were central reference points around which everything revolved for respondents: the Middle Eastern ideal of female sexuality; and shame and its relationship to one aspect of honor, *'ird*. This crisis occurs as a result of

[19] The exact numbers were as follows: "153 girls of Italian parentage ... 24 of whom had been born in Canada. ...153 Italian immigrant boys and 151 nonimmigrant, non-Italian boys...and a group of nonimmigrant, non-Italian girls (N = 151) ... available from the same schools" (Danziger 1976:201).

contradiction between two ideological constructs[20] of the female, in particular female sexuality.

Data confirmed the continuing existence and influence of a traditional Middle Eastern female archetype, the Madonna-Whore, in the Canadian context. Adherence to the Madonna archetype leads to a 'feminine split', a deep division among females in the Arab Canadian community. Those who do adhere to the archetype and remain in the "box" view negatively those who do not. This defamation is sanctioned and supported by conservative elements within the community. Kocturk's (1992) usage of the terms Madonna-Whore in her study of Turkish Muslim immigrants in Sweden supports this researcher's findings of an objective reality of this value system and of this stereotyping of the feminine in Middle Eastern culture.

These traditional female archetypes and honor and shame complexes which are still to be found operating among the (Christian) Arab Canadian community, immersed both males and females in a behavioral code which conditions them to particular gender stereotypes. These may have been appropriate to past cultural contexts but today in Canada and even in some Middle Eastern countries, they are not. Neither the North American context nor the ideological climate of the times today provide any fertile ground for the traditional Middle Eastern female archetypes to be maintained.

The archetypes of male and female gender roles are so central to Middle Eastern culture that they in a sense represent the last bastion of traditional cultural identity among Arab Canadians. In order to adapt to current Canadian context these must first be dismembered then reassembled. These archetypes are not surrendered easily, but they <u>are</u> surrendered, transmuted and recast in a mold more suited to the contemporary reality of Canadian society. This process of ideological meltdown and reformation is the courtship crisis.

The courtship crisis exposes the two dimensional and static nature of the Middle Eastern feminine ideal. It forces parents and children to break the 'big tabu'. Children propel parents to confront tabus directly through misbehavior. The more liberal legislation and moral climate in Canada is used by young people to gain freedoms. The fact that in Canada civil authorities do not consider dating behavior or even consensual sex between teenagers as criminal means that the Middle Eastern tabu is not supported in this new context. This means that parents who keep their children ignorant or pretend their children are non-sexual are seen as unrealistic and are criticized by members of the larger society. This comes as a shock to many parents and may bring them to a point where they begin to question the validity of sexual tabus.

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[20] Middle Eastern verses Western.

The Canadian context reveals honor and shame constructs are also undergoing a transmutation given the different prevailing ideology of the 'female', specifically female sexuality. Issues of shame become resolved by enlarging the behavioral envelope in which women can act and retain honor. In Canada today acts that were typically labeled *'aar,* and responses to these acts, are changing considerably in most cases. A female out of the "box" is no longer associated with shame and dishonor, as long as she conforms to Canadian norms of acceptable behavior. Fathers realize that daughters pursuing education, dating, and marrying at a later age, are not violating issues of honor and shame.

This transformation of the ideological and behavioral constructs of Middle Eastern honor and shame in the Canadian context indicates a shift is occurring in the traditional Middle Eastern value system which was characterized by an 'other-determined' and 'other-oriented' focus for the individual, to a focus which now centres on the "Self" as a basis for decision-making and action.

A transmutation of both the Middle Eastern ideology of the feminine and the ideologies of honor and shame is most notable among *modern* second generation respondents. New ideals are emerging for females which are broader, more in-depth, and more holistic in expression than the extreme image of the previous archetypal opposition. Young women no longer try to be Madonna's nor are they assuming that the only alternative to this is to be a whore. The Canadian cultural context allows for more than two choices. Sexuality and honor are not mutually exclusive in this context. As a result of this more comprehensive conception of the female, the traditional ideology of honor and shame has very little hold over their lives.

By expanding the conceptualization of the female, a corresponding increase in options open to these women also occurs. Given the choices and opportunities to live one's life with fuller expression and self fulfillment, very few (Christian) Arab Canadian women are choosing to perpetuate the traditional roles imposed upon Arab women.

Issues of control reach resolution through a process of three stages for the father: a denial stage which does not allow for any possibility that he is not in control; a resistance phase in which there is nothing he can do to stop change; and an acceptance phase when he must give his daughter autonomy.

Issues of endogamy reach a point of resolution when Christian Arab Canadian parents come to the realization that it is not what their children desire and that demographics in Canada necessitate exogamous unions. Fathers who do not alter their ideological position with regard to courtship and marriage and their sons, even after experiencing a courtship crisis with their daughters, will most likely experience a courtship crisis with their sons. Among *traditional*

Christian Arab Canadians who are reluctant to flow with the inevitable changes that are occurring, the process of adaptation will be slower and more fraught with behavioral and ideological conflicts. The resolution of all four issues, (breakdown of endogamy; patriarchal control; honor and shame; Madonna-Whore archetypes) although separate in themselves, more often than not occur in combination.

There are *traditional* Christian Arab Canadians that still maintain their allegiance to family honor *'ird* and the modesty code despite the fact they are thousands of miles away from the Middle East which gave rise to it. This raises a question of whether these ideologies continue to fulfill important functions in a new environment. It well may be that the concepts of honor [*'ird*] and shame constitute not only a behavioral code but also a framework for establishing cultural institutions important to adaptation in the new environment. The fact that business and social relationships within the Arab community are strongly influenced by reputation might be of critical importance to understanding the persistence of these ideologies.

The courtship crisis is not dependent upon size of the ethnic group. It is related to degree which female behavior is controlled and degree to which people adhere to a modesty code of female chastity and purity. This researcher suspects that within many Asian, Mediterranean, African and Indian ethnic communities, similar events are transpiring. Where there is not the same emphasis on premarital virginity and chastity, for example as in Scandanavian ethnic immigrant communities, there would not be this type of conflict between parent and child. Other types of female archetypes would be adhered to. Some of the insights gleaned from the courtship related conflict in the Christian Arab Canadian community might be extended to other immigrant parents and children experiencing similar conflicts.

Educational Implications

Neither cross-cultural ideological constructs of gender, courtship and marital practices, nor patriarchal and community based social controls in relation to these, are addressed in the formal educational system, specifically at the high school level.[21] Current-day ideological constuctions of female archetypes, so

[21] Data collected on sex education curriculum was acquired through three sources: second generation respondents testimony of their personal experiences in the CALM course in high school; informal dialogue with CALM course teachers; and an informal telephone interview with the co-ordinator of a new peer sex education program "peer education program" (PEP) at a local high school.

radically altered from those of twenty years ago, are undergoing such rapid change that information and knowledge relating to both content and process of change is to be found only in the informal sector. As a result, there is disparity between the transmission of formal and informal information through school and non-school based milieux.

A greater understanding of various influences (formal-informal transmission of education, etc.) and subsequent effects upon parent-child relationships within the Christian Arab Canadian community might better inform educational and curricular development. Formal education can facilitate this process through programmatic instruction of that which currently is transmitted informally, thus bridging the gap and contrast between formal-informal transmission of sex education. As it stands today, the western construct is not too different from the traditional Arab system - minimal transmission of information typically presented after the fact.

Students currently do not benefit from the constrained nature of course content. Sexuality is but a small subsection of CALM courses. The limited time allotted to the topic of sexuality provides no opportunity to address aspects that are not biologically and/or reproductively grounded. There is very little room, if any, for discussion in formal classes about comparative studies of courtship and marital patterns that vary with one's culture or ethnic background, nor discussion of religious factors influencing cultural patterns, nor consideration of the conflict arising at family, community and societal levels.

While the school does not address these issues, they are a reality for students in classrooms. Given the diversity of students within classrooms these issues need to be addressed and explored in environments of openness and tolerance. Until formal educational systems address these issues, Canadian youth will find the informal sector their only avenue for answers - despite its weaknesses. Moreover, perspectives of ideological constructs are undergoing rapid change and curriculum needs to keep up with ongoing changes. Teachers need to maintain currency with these changes. Hence students and teachers need to develop a rapport that acknowledges student's roles of informing discourse and dialogue.

In order to address these issues, discussion needs to occur: of different relationships and the problems people encounter; sexuality and cross-cultural studies of differences that exist in courtship and marriage; gender ideologies and conflict in various areas; and the power and relativity of archetypes must be brought out into the open. Tabus must be challenged and the fact that different cultures do not all teach these same tabus, nor adhere to the same archetypes must be addressed. Cross cultural patterns and religious factors that influence these patterns, and conflict at familial, community and societal levels must be addressed. Exposing students to different archetypes will provide them with

knowledge and skills to recognize, cope with, and understand the power behind those archetypes, especially within the framework of relationships, gender interaction, and ideology.

This researcher suggests a pilot study in a local high-school to inform curricular and pedagogical developments on relationships, gender ideologies and sexuality, especially as they relate to cultural diversity. Allotting more time for new courses dealing with life issues is recommended.

In order to address these issues, new courses have to be developed. A series of Life Issues courses -- an umbrella term for several courses -- could incorporate new curricula addressing these issues. For example, courses might include *relationship education*, *education of gender ideologies*, and *sexuality*. Content might address how peer group pressures and cultural memberships work, or provide examination of cross-cultural and religious factors relating to and influencing these areas. *Relationship Education* is not just about male-female relationships but rather relationships in more general terms, friendships and peer group behavior.

Issues addressed in the *Education of Gender Ideologies* course might include discussions on cross-cultural and religious beliefs and behavior patterns that influence relationships, socializing, dating, mate-selection and marital beliefs and behavior; or conflict arising at family, community and societal levels in these areas. Without reiterating biological and reproductive aspects of sexuality, curriculum that incorporates psychological, social, cross-cultural, religious, conflictual and comparative aspects of these issues could be addressed.

New courses may alleviate conflicts between parents and children, between children within the school context, and between ethnic or cultural groups and the larger society. It also provides students with some control over their lives and a more solid base from which to make decisions in different areas of their lives. Students need to realize that information is context based, and that different sources may not always coincide. Youths need to have information provided through formal educational structures so that they might define, clarify and put into perspective what is going on in their lives, rather than fumbling within an information vaccuum. Canada is multicultural society which should be pioneering formal systems of addressing these issues.

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